

# **The Pernicious Problems of the Scheme/Content Distinction**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis offers a solution to the problems caused by a particular sort of philosophical project – that of attempting to identify the roots of normativity; of showing what it is that allows that we have norms which can be applied to the empirical world.

Transcendental idealism sets the mould for the form of such projects as I will examine. It does so, I argue, for two reasons: (1) it considers seriously the problems inherent in taking a normatively and modally bereft world to provide criteria for the application of our norms to it, and (2), after due reflection, it allows us to see that the response it offers to such problems serves only to reiterate, in a particularly clear manner, the problems it addresses.

The thesis claims we should avoid the attempt signalled in (1). We can do so, I will suggest, if we can find a way to think of the world we inhabit as thoroughly modally and normatively imbued and to take these features of the world at face value – that is, if we can find a way to think of the world being as it is which does not call for a further explanation in appeals to anything anormative. For the desire to give such explanations, I argue, ineluctably leads to a reinstatement of the very problems such explanations are a response to by divesting norms of their force. The thesis thus aims to provide a way to avoid (1), and to give examples of how if anything of the desire to give such explanations is left over once this is done, we are bound to make a mistake which is a variant of (2).

In the thesis, then, transcendental idealism sets the scene for a consideration of the normativity involved in the use of descriptive language, of perception, and finally in general causality. In conclusion, I point to an alternative to the project identified above in an attempt to gain a perspicuous description of how things are as opposed to any (self-defeating, I claim) explanation of normativity in its roots.

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**Author's Declaration**

All of the original material contained herein is the work of the author. None of the original material contained herein is published or reproduced elsewhere.

## **Introduction**

This thesis is concerned with *transcendental idealism*, the philosophical picture which takes seriously the problems inherent in marrying the idea of an anormative world as it is in itself with the fact that our experience of the world and action within the causal world must be thoroughly normative. The central problem with marrying these ways of thinking of the world and our experience of it is expressed by this question: why is the apparently anormative empirical world of a form to which our norms are applicable? The transcendental idealist response is that our conceptual scheme is partly constitutive of the empirical world because it somehow unifies with the world as it is in itself to create the empirical world, so the empirical world is of a form to which our norms are applicable by default.

This response is interestingly incoherent: it is incoherent because it only appears to answer the question at hand by explaining the applicability of our norms to the world in a self-undermining way; a way which re-instantiates a dualism which it is seeking to avoid. It is interesting for at least two reasons:

- It brings to the fore the deeply pernicious nature of accepting a dualism between the anormative and the normative, a dualism which it seems almost all other philosophical pictures either accept, or deny in problematic ways which transcendental idealism is at pains to avoid.
- Taking the problems of associating norms and their application to the anormative world which transcendental idealism makes clear to heart, whilst attempting to avoid failing in the manner of the Kantian transcendental idealist, can appear inevitably to lead to those pictures being self-undermining in a manner analogous to the Kantian transcendental idealist's picture.

It will, then, be a large part of the purpose of this thesis to chart some of the ways in which other responses to the same problems as the Kantian transcendental idealist picture responds to have strived to distance themselves from the Kantian transcendental idealist picture, but failed to do so. These responses (be they attempted solutions, resolutions, dissolutions, or dismissals) all fail to distance themselves because in articulating their responses to the question 'why is the apparently anormative empirical



world of a form to which our norms are applicable?' they ultimately rely upon metaphysical pictures which are similarly destructive of the very possibility of sense. The cases I will look at all embody some of the following family of confusions as symptoms of their shared trait.

**Confusion 1:** that there are prerequisites of sense which are intrinsically normative (and often, even worse, that they directly intimate to us that they are so).

**Confusion 2:** that there are norms which give their own criteria for correct application.

**Confusion 3:** that of keeping the metaphysical picture of the normative as opposed to the anormative by holding that: i) the world we refer to is anormative, and is either given a normative role by our practices, or is only brought into view by our normative practices; or, ii) the world we refer to is normative and hence cannot be the anormative world, so the anormative world plays no normative role in our normative practices; or, iii) endorsing the *metaphysical picture* that the world we refer to is normative so we cannot give sense to any other idea of the world by *explaining what it is to be normative* (this is a limiting case of this confusion because, as will unfold through this thesis, *explaining what it is to be normative* is to tacitly take up a position outside of the normative realm).

Of these confusions, it is important to note that the first two can be accommodated in *subtle* ways by retaining the variants of the transcendental idealist picture listed under confusion 3. Because in such metaphysical pictures norms which set their own criteria and intrinsic normativity can be accommodated as *sui generis natural facts*, they can figure in *denials* of the need for an explanation of the relation between scheme (or norms) and content (the empirical world). The problem with treating norms as in some sense *sui generis* is that the efficacy of the norms becomes problematic in ways whose form I will describe in chapter 1 and identify throughout this thesis (in particular, cf. 1.31-1.33, 4.12).

Thus, in the cases making confusions 1 and 2, one is still endorsing a philosophical

picture upon which the relation between norms and the world is problematic (I detail these problems in chapters 1 and 2). Making confusion 3, one is avoiding such problems by appealing (whether intentionally or not) to some specious metaphysical picture in order to cordon off norms from the world or unite norms with the world (I describe the variety of positions given under 'confusion 3' in chapter 3). I will thus be criticising philosophers both for giving explanations where they ought not, and for painting pictures of the relation between norms and the world which require further explanation (which indicates they have not rid themselves of the dogmatism in question), but denying that their pictures require them to do any explaining.

My aim, though, is not to paint the philosophical pictures I criticise as *essentially* useless; nor to give a reason for rejecting the scheme-content dichotomies they embody *tout court*. Rather, I want to make a case for the usefulness of thinking in terms of scheme and content – such as these pictures *could* provide – in a way which is not destructive of the possibility of sense. So, I am implicitly making a case for the usefulness of treating the philosophical positions presented above as means of *elucidation* but not *theoretical explanations* (cf. 4.3).

To take three examples:

- Steiner (2009) holds onto a tacit notion of the determinate prerequisites of sense and the external relation of norms to the empirical world, which, if dropped, leaves a picture which neatly describes the inseparability of applied norms and their empirical criteria (cf. 2.5-2.6).
- Read (2005), by rejecting the idea of ineffable prerequisites of sense but not shaking off a picture of language upon which sense is determinate, commits himself to rejecting the use of criterion-less norms along with norms which give their own criteria for application (cf. 4.13); if this commitment is appropriately adjusted, what is left is a nice illustration of the point that if one treats anything as intrinsically and foundationally normative, then they invoke something both ineffable and normatively inert (for a clear expression of this thought cf. *PI* 46).
- Evans (1985) holds that we *must* deploy a partly theoretical notion of *intrinsic properties* which *could* never be checked against any criteria, and in doing so instantiates confusion 2. When this confusion is explained away, what is left over is a very rich description of our experience of space-occupying stuff which

needs no theoretical supplement (cf. 5-5.3).

In each of these cases, then, a dialogical playing out of the philosophical picture presented brings to light a way of mis-picturing of the world – a way of picturing upon which sense would not be possible – but it also makes possible positive elucidations of what we already do with language (cf. 4.3).

How, though, can this way of doing philosophy be realised? As follows:

A) by adjusting our notion of *the world* in such a way that we do not conceive of *the world* as in any sense anormative or amodal;

B) by adjusting our philosophical method such that we do not use transcendental argument in order to establish determinate prerequisites of sense, but rather *we* determine prerequisites of particular models of language in order to create '*objects of comparison*'.<sup>1</sup> Objects of comparison allow us a descriptive purchase upon the ways in which our normative practices relate to one another and to the world.

A) and B) are interdependent. B) depends upon A) because it is only if an already normative structure is available to us that we can determine some part of it to be a prerequisite of an object of comparison in a way which does not require us to make confusion 1 or 2.

A) depends upon B) because a normative structure just is a system of relations of accountability between some relata; making sense of what it is to be a relatum just is describing the place of a relatum within a space of modal and normative relations. Seeing something as occupying a place within a space of modal and normative relations then requires the ability to individuate such a place; and individuating a place requires us to be able to hold some relations fixed in order to get a backdrop against which to make comparisons which show what goes on at a certain place.

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<sup>1</sup> I take the notion of an object of comparison from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations (PI)*.

Our clear and simple language-games are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of language—as it were first approximations, ignoring friction and air-resistance. The language-games are rather set up as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities. (*PI* 130)

In playing through the transcendental idealist picture in the way I suggest, and making clear what one needs to do to avoid it, I also want to show why the transcendental idealist picture is so hard to drop (I do so in chapters 2 and 4). Roughly, it is hard to drop because the following confusions form a sort of circle, so taking up any one confusion leads to taking up the other confusions and to the subsequent reinforcement of each confusion:

- a confusion about the role of objects of comparison in allowing us to consider the objects of investigation (what we already do) makes it seem as though the properties which an object of comparison is stipulated to have are essential characteristics of the object of investigation;
- thinking things have essential characteristics leads us to the mistaken view that there are determinate prerequisites of sense which underpin our normative lives;
- thinking that there can be no normative structure unless there are some determinate prerequisites of sense leads one to lose sight of the idea that things can be normatively structured without having a criteria for correct use. This obscures the difference between the roles played by objects of comparison and the roles played by objects of investigation.

I have been presenting these ideas as innovations; I think, however, that the later Wittgenstein has already played through the transcendental idealist picture in order to use it as the sort of heuristic tool I claimed it can be. As I result, I think there is already a philosophical stance available upon which normativity and modality are natural and irreducible features of the world we inhabit which ought to be taken at face value. I will thus be drawing heavily upon the later Wittgenstein's work.

Here is how all these themes will play out in the chapters to follow:

**Chapter 1:** in this chapter I introduce various distinctions which will be used throughout the thesis. I then use these distinctions to describe the landscape of problems one faces in answering the question 'why is the empirical world of a form to which our norms are applicable?'. Next, I describe how normative authority and

normative force interact in descriptive language use, and I show the relation between norms and their worldly criteria to be problematic in such cases, if we take the world and our normative capacities to be externally related.

**Chapter 2:** here I show that 1) our experience of space-occupying stuff as space-occupying stuff is normative; 2) accounting for the relation between criteria and our appropriate use of perceptual norms is problematic in such cases unless we locate the normative content in the visual experience itself; 3) locating the normative content in the visual experience itself is problematic unless the experience is internally related to some normative authority - an object.

In unpacking an acceptable sense of an experience being internally related the empirical object of the experience, I draw upon and criticise Steiner's account of mathematical novelty. In doing so I give an overview of the way to treat the relation between norms and their criteria for application which I will unpack in chapters 3 and 4.

**Chapter 3:** here I take a step back in order to fill out the overview which ended the previous chapter. I do so by characterising the transcendental idealist response to the problems surrounding the relation of norms and their criteria for application. I show in more detail the particular way in which this response fails, then I look at a particular way of modifying the account in order to salvage its promise. I show that such modification is bound to fail, and I attribute this failure to carrying forward the mistaken presumptions discussed above.

Here a consideration of certain aspects of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* becomes useful. I show that whilst the *Tractatus* shares a failing of the transcendental idealist's problem, it does not do so in a straightforward way.

I show that if we appreciate the particular failing of the *Tractatus*, we are in a better position to see how the later Wittgenstein helps us to shift away from the transcendental idealist's picture.

**Chapter 4:** In this chapter the themes of the thesis so far culminate. I elaborate upon

the claim that scheme-content dichotomies are pernicious, and I use Cora Diamond's treatment of Kripke's claims concerning the relation between the standard metre stick in Paris and measurements in metres as an exemplification of a way of exposing a philosophical picture as destructive of the possibility of sense if used dogmatically, whilst neither assuming a metaphysical stance with which to do so, nor divesting the target picture of its usefulness.

The broader message is that deploying such a method as Diamond's allows us to work from examinations of particular cases to an appreciation of the import of avoiding dogmatism without ourselves taking up a dogmatic position; we can do so by using *objects of comparison*.

**Chapter 5:** here I apply the position developed in chapters 1-4 in order to show that causality is an inherently normative phenomenon. I do so for three main reasons:

- 1) To show how Kant takes the categories and the world of substance to be externally related, and how this commitment can be dropped whilst still retaining important benefits.
- 2) To allay the urge to think of the empirical world as essentially merely empirical – merely empirical in the sense of being bereft of normativity and modality – an urge which is bound to reinstate pernicious scheme-content dichotomies.
- 3) To show that treating causality as an inherently normative phenomenon neither robs causes of their objectivity nor science of its explanatory power.

## **Chapter 1: Normative Force and Normative Authority**

### **1.1 Normativity and Relations**

Before moving on to transcendental idealism *per se*, I will offer some reasons as to why we need to tell a story about our normative capacities by talking about the relationship between normativity itself and language (cf 1.4-1.6), and then, more broadly, between normativity and some particular sorts of perceptual experience (cf. Chapter 2). I will use these descriptions of normative relations in order to provide a framework upon which to describe a broad collection of positions as varieties of transcendental idealism (also broadly construed – for a characterisation of this broad construal cf. 1.32), and both to show the general failings of varieties of transcendental idealism thus broadly construed, and how to avoid such failings (cf chapters 3 and 4). In the current section I want to focus on the notion of normativity itself.

When introducing someone to the concept of normativity one typically starts with propositions that concern ascriptions of value, or lack of it. Paradigm examples are, for instance, moral claims like 'one ought not to be proud', or evaluative claims like 'that's actually a poor washing machine'. To make sense of these statements, ideally, one would have some idea about why pride is so deplorable, and what to expect of a good washing machine; to grasp that they are normative, though, it would suffice to have a vague idea that there are ways in which, and ways in which not to act, and ways in which washing machines might excel or fall short; or, more generally, that there is some standard to which these sorts of things are accountable.

The above sorts of cases are presented as paradigm examples because of the clear relation between the standards in question and particular and familiar human interests; that is, in these cases, the value of washing machines and of pride has a dependency on their place within human practices which we can explain, or at least helpfully elaborate upon, simply by pointing out interests we can agree we share and asking what role the things in consideration play with regard to this interest.

In a less obvious way, we might talk of normativity as inherent in concept use: concepts are accountable to the way the world is; and any particular concept use is

accountable to other actual and possible uses of concepts. What makes this sort of case slightly less perspicuous is the open endedness of concept use – whilst there is a clear end to the use of things like washing machines, and, given an agreement on moral interests, avoiding pride, concept use cannot be pinned down in this way: it is not clear that there is any fixity to what in the world concepts are accountable to, and there are problems with thinking of concept uses as accountable in this way at all; nor is there any obvious fixity to quite how particular concept uses fit into the nexus of accountability they co-constitute with other concept uses.

In another less obvious way still, we might also talk of some particular for which there is a standard to which that particular is in some sense accountable – a standard which is seemingly independent of the role such particulars play in any given practices; here we might include norms of natural selection, or of the proper function of a natural kind. What is less clear is the following. To make sense of normativity we need to appeal to some mode of accountability; however, we would normally think of accountability as only making sense in the context of practices concerning reasons; and yet, the relata governed by the norms involved in the above examples are usually thought of in terms of the merely causal.

To help us to get at these less obvious uses of the concept of normativity I want to make some terminology clear by noting that in the paradigm cases discussed above one can make the following distinction:

- the particular *standards* in question so far appear to bear an *external relation* to the particular in question; which is to say, in each case we can imagine the same particular in the absence of accountability to those particular standards, or in the presence of others. For instance, we may have valued this sort of pride, we might have expected different – perhaps aesthetic – things of washing machines, or there could perhaps be a possible world with the same natural kind but different laws of nature.
- there is an *internal relation* between objects like washing machines and *some* standard. We cannot make sense of what it would be to be a washing machine,



nor have an idea of a washing machine featuring in thought experiments in which we vary its place in a wider normative web, without an initial web of accountability within which to locate it. Inasmuch as making sense of this sort of accountability involves making sense of succeeding or failing to play a role within a system of other things, it seems we could not individuate washing machines as washing machines without taking them to be accountable to some initial norm of proper function.

I am describing these features of a possible logical landscape in order to introduce questions regarding how processes of individuation relate to the individuals they bear normative relations to. More particularly, on the brief sketch given above it looks like the internal relations are prerequisites of a particular kind of individual's intelligibility to us; once intelligible, notions of such particular kinds of individuals are free to be used in descriptions of external relations.

Wittgenstein expresses something similar here:

I should like to say, if there were only an external connection no connection could be described at all, since we only describe the external connection by means of the internal one. If this is lacking, we lose the footing we need for describing anything at all – just as we can't shift anything with our hands unless our feet are planted firmly. (PR 66)

However, we should note here, the matter is far from being described as a simple identification of the *real* internal relations followed by a charting of the relevant dependences.

In order to get to this theme more clearly, I will now describe some distinctions which are key to the clear framing of a discussion of the relation between normativity and modal relations.

## **1.2 Internal and External Relations, Determination, and Normativity**

I have just been using a distinction between internal and external relations; external

relations were opposed to internal relations with regard to the modal freedom of the relata involved in a relation. More specifically, relations are external if the relata are modally free of one another, where, as Schaffer puts it:

[m]odally free entities are like multiple knobs on a stereo. There are no necessary connections between the setting of the one knob and the other. Any way the one knob can be set, and any way the other knob can be set, is a way both knobs can be set. All combinations are possible. (Schaffer 2010; 351)

When opposing internal relations to modally free relations, however, we must be careful to distinguish between different ways in which two relata might be modally constrained. As, Johansson (2011) frames it, relata might be constrained by

**Strongly internal Relations (SIR):** “there is between a and b a strongly internal relation iff, a cannot exist if b does not exist, and vice versa” (*op. cit.*; 7)

or by,

**Weakly internal Relations (WIR):** “there is between a and b a weakly internal relation R iff, a and b can exist independently of each other, but if both exist then, necessarily, aRb.” (*op. cit.*; 7)

(Given the above definitions of Johansson 's, we should also note that we may want to talk about asymmetric strongly internal relations:

**Asymmetric Strongly internal Relations:** there is between a and b an asymmetric strongly internal relation R iff, a can exist independently of b, but b cannot exist independently of a; if b exists then, necessarily, aRb.)

Making these distinctions is important in the present context because recognising weakly internal relations to be distinct from strongly internal relations allows us to talk of two things necessarily putting modal constraints upon each other only if those two things do in fact exist. The distinction thus allows us to separate matters where: a) the possibility of the relata's existence is a separate matter from their relationship (their actuality is modally free with regard to one another, but the mode of their existence is not); b) cases where there is no separating the things in question and their relation to

one another.

For instance, with the above distinctions in hand, we can make a distinction between relations like *resemblance*, which is a weak internal relation (for instance, if two footballs exist then they necessarily resemble one another, but the existence of one football does not depend upon nor entail the existence of another), and internal relations like *interdependence* – which is a strong internal relation (if the concept of a football depends upon the concept of playing football and the concept of playing football depends upon the concept of a football then it is unintelligible that footballs could be conceived of without the practice of playing football being conceived of and vice versa).

Aside from the usefulness of delineating exactly which relations and relata we are talking about and their modal implications, a potentially deeper usefulness is made available by distinguishing between different types of internal relation. Once we have made the above distinctions, we are in a better position from which to ask questions about what differentiates modes of modal constraint, and how the different sorts of relations relate to one another.

Given that we have, in effect, characterised strongly internal relations as, as Glock puts it,

...relations which could not fail to obtain, since they are given with or (partly) constitutive of the terms (objects or relata). (Glock 1996; 189)

there is a *prima facie* story to tell according to which strongly internal relations articulate the modal properties which are intrinsic to, or at least essential to, the individuation of individuals of any given kind. Given that these properties expressed by strongly internal relations are modal properties, when instantiated they bear relations of compatibility and exclusion to the properties of individuals of their own and other kinds.

If the above *prima facie* story is correct, then we can then appeal to those relations of compatibility and exclusion in order to articulate weakly internal relations: given that

strongly internal relations articulate an individual's essential properties, weakly internal relations articulate the constraints different individuals would put upon each other if those individuals existed. In this way, the modal properties implicitly expressed by internal relations likewise can be seen as underwriting “the rules of [a] framework” of the sort Carnap appeals to in *Empiricism, Semantics, Ontology*:

To recognize something as a real thing or event means to succeed in incorporating it into the system of things at a particular space-time position so that it fits together with the other things as real, according to the rules of the framework. (Carnap 1991; 86)

With reference to Carnap's idea of a framework, strongly internal relations articulate what can constitute part of a framework; given these parts, weakly internal relations articulate what possible frameworks there can be.

Given this distinction between different kinds of modal constraint one might now be tempted to ask what, if anything at all, grounds strongly internal relations. Falling for such a temptation might lead one to appeal to a distinction between properties which are the properties they are because of the relations they bear to other properties, and properties which are the properties they are independently of the relations they bear to other properties. This distinction could be construed as a distinction between determinables and determinates, respectively. So we need now to consider what an appeal to such a distinction would amount to.

If strongly internal relations form the rudiments of any possible system of space-time, in Carnap's terms, it is determinates which, by grounding strongly internal relations, determine the modal landscape. Matters get a little messy, however, if we start to wonder what the determinates are determinates in virtue of, or even whether there is any sense to the idea of determinates at all.

Consider, for instance, how we make sense of the underlying network of resemblances which underwrite our individuation of things like footballs. To individuate an instance of a football which has not been yet recognised as a football we must be able to recognise that the part of the world we are considering is similar to the parts of the world we already recognise as footballs with respect to their intrinsic and extrinsic

properties; to be identified as a football that ball must resemble footballs more than any other things. Yet, whilst it may *seem* in some sense natural to say that footballs resemble each other more than they do, say, bricks, it is far from clear that there is any *absolute* sense in which this is so; for resemblances might be drawn in respect of many different features and combinations of features of whichever respective parts of the world we are comparing. In this sense resemblances come cheaply (and, it is important not to forget that unless the aforementioned features of parts of the world are in some sense given to us, their individuation is problematic in the same way as the football's individuation is). Narrowing down the options for what gets associated with what, then, is a matter of first having some criterion of comparison – something which sets the standard for resemblance.

However, there are an indefinite number of potential criteria with which to relate most parts of the world we would seek to compare. To make sense of resemblance talk, then, we already need some framework of salient relations of resemblance, set by the aforementioned criteria, which fix the ways in which to compare the relata in question. Such a framework, however, seems to be articulable only by recourse to just such relations between relata as we are here hoping to identify the grounding for by finding a criteria for football-hood. Thus, to individuate footballs, it seems that, in the above sense, we need to already know what a football is.

Given that we do accept that resemblance is always resemblance in some respect, we might then try to explain the natural sense in which footballs bear more resemblance to each other than to anything else by claiming that footballs resemble each other in more respects than any given football resembles anything else. To do so, however, is to beg the question, for as we have just seen, respects by which to judge resemblance come cheaply, so to pick the set of resemblances which matters we would have to already have an idea of the way in which footballs resemble one another.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A clear objection might be that to take things like a footballs for our example is to start, as it were, too far up the ontological ladder – that whilst there may be, for instance, vagueness concerning which resemblance relations we count as salient, there would not be the space for vagueness with less ontologically complex things. Another related obvious objection is that footballs are not determinates. The real issue then, the objection, would go, is with *simples* in whatever form they happen to take.

By taking footballs to be simples, I am here only trying to establish the form of a problem that would apply to simples if there were any.

Besides the above justification for treating footballs as simples there is a stronger reason still for appealing to things which are not simples in order to outline the concept of being simple. The same sort

So, unless we can make sense of some basic and obvious class of absolute resemblance, resemblance will always be resemblance in some respects, which respects, however set, occupy a central role within our conceptual lives; as Johansson (2011), for instance, puts it:

Without relations such as *greater than with respect to X* there would be no metric or ordinal measurement X-scales at all, only classifications by means of names. And without relations such as *exact resemblance with respect to X*, it would be impossible to use a measurement scale on two different occasions, and truly claim that if the measurement values are the same then the objects measured have the same determinate property. (*op. cit.*; 9)

### **1.3 Authority and Force**

The development of the themes and claims of 1– 1.2 is going to take some subtle treatment . There are, however, two clear points which have arisen thus far which I would presently like to keep in mind:

- When we reflect upon what makes something count as falling under a particular concept, such as 'a football', we do so in part by appeal to different sorts of internal relations. These relations, in turn, make the articulation of the bearing of external relations to other things intelligible; that is, they demarcate realms of modal constraint such that if something is outside of that realm anything inside that realm bears an external relation to it.
- Individuating anything as an *x* depends upon internal relations, and which internal relations count is set by their accountability to some standard, so here there is normativity at play.

So far, then, we have seen that the matter of what resembles what – and so of what, if anything, we count as determinates – is normative in at least the sense that there is some standard, however set (for instance by, choice, happenstance, custom, biology,

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of example could not be constructed with *sui generis determinates* even if there were *sui generis* determinates, for they would be determinate prerequisites of sense, and inasmuch, we *could not* speak about them. This issue will be brought out in 4.13 (also cf. *PI* 46).

the individuals themselves), which determines whatever resemblances and relations between things we are to count as salient.

I now want to introduce some general distinctions, and outline some key positions, which will allow us better to describe a tension between allowing that something serves as a criterion of correctness for concept-use, or individuation, and making sense of how it can do so; this is a tension which I will be giving examples of in the rest of this chapter and the next (examples concerning language and perception, respectively). The wider purpose of making this distinction is that having these general distinctions in hand will allow us a way of articulating how accepting a deep philosophical assumption – that of the external relation between the normative realm and the empirical world – puts us in a set of variously related problematic positions (see below). For this reason, making this distinction also serves to provide a vocabulary with which to describe how transcendental idealism recognises and responds to this problem, but fails.

The first term I want to define is one which will be used to refer to whatever is, in a given context and respect, the standard for correctness and incorrectness. Call such things **Normative Authorities**, where normative authority is defined so:

**Normative Authority:** that which determines correctness and incorrectness.

For there to be useful standards for correctness and incorrectness there must be some mode of holding whatever is being determined to be correct or incorrect to account; standards must be able to exert **Normative Force**, where normative force is defined so:

**Normative Force:** the non-accidental conforming of a practice to some standard (or standards) of correctness and incorrectness.

With these themes, and the above terminology, in hand we can set out some options for the form the relation between normative authority and normative force may take.

- First, one might think that there being normative authorities is a prerequisite of the possibility of any given system of normative force, but not

vice versa. As such, normative authority must be privileged in the order of an explanation of our normative practices.

- Secondly, and in direct opposition to the first, one might think that there being normative force – the structure which affords accountability – is a prerequisite of there being accountability to any normative authorities, but not vice versa. As such, normative force must be privileged in the order of an explanation of our normative practices.
- Thirdly, one might hold a no-priority view; that normative force, and normative authority have no priority over one another.

As this variety of possible positions is important, I want to use a few subsections to characterise them in a general way before I make the rest of the distinctions that I want to introduce.

### **1.31 Privileging Normative Authority**

For an example of an explanation which privileges normative authority, consider an account of measuring length using the metric system upon which the claim is made that for there to be a system of measurement in terms of metres, there must already be something of which it is true that it bears the property '1 metre'. The reason for making the claim could be this: in order for there to be any determinables – things which have some length in metres or portions of a metre – there must first be some determinate by relation to which a determinable can be determined to be so.

If this same line of reasoning applies to all systems of determinates and determinables, then there must be some normative authorities which have an intrinsic power to exert normative force; and so a full explanation of a normative practice would, upon such a picture, flow from an identification of the intrinsic normativity of such determinates.

As we briefly touched upon in the case of individuating a football (1.2), however, unless we can make sense of what it is to be a standard (a normative authority) without already having a framework with which to relate a standard to an array of other things,



we can not give sense to that normative authority being an *intrinsic* source of normative authority. The problem with this idea for one who privileges normative authority is, then, that bearing particular relations to other individuals seems constitutive of the possibility of standing as a normative authority, but privileging normative authority demands that sources of normative authority are intrinsically so (viz., they stand as potential sources of normative authority in the absence of any relations to other things); hence it is not clear that the idea of *putting* normative authority first in the order of explanation of our normative practices makes sense.

The problems with the idea of privileging normative authority, then, revolve around whether the idea of something having intrinsic normative authority makes sense. I will later argue that these problems are elucidated by considering the later Wittgenstein's move away from the idea of determinate simples of the *Tractatus* (cf 3.11-3.41, 4), and are brought to the fore in particular when Wittgenstein considers the matter of private sensations (cf. 4.11). I will defer making this link, however, until later in the thesis (cf. 3-4) because the treatment of Wittgenstein's arguments requires some context setting.

A closely related link, which is worth illustrating now because I will appeal to it in 1.51, is that if an account privileges normative authority in the order of explanation of our normative relation to the world, it will be prone to feature '*Givens*' of a kind which are described by *The Myth of the Given*.

The idea of the *Myth of the Given* is one which originated with Sellars (1997). Here is an early characterisation Sellars gives of one form of the myth :

One of the forms taken by the Myth of the Given is the idea that there is, indeed *must be*, a structure of particular matter of fact such that (a) each fact can not only be noninferentially known to be the case, but presupposes no other knowledge either of particular matter of fact, or of general truths; and (b) such that the noninferential knowledge of facts belonging to this structure constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims -- particular and general -- about the world. (Sellars 1997: 68-9)

The sense in which I will use the term is, however, that which McDowell (2008) defines here:

Givenness in the sense of the Myth would be an availability for cognition to subjects whose getting what is supposedly Given to them does not draw on capacities required for the sort of cognition in question. (*op. cit.*; 1).

I will use the notion of the *Myth of the Given* as characterised by McDowell rather than by Sellars because Sellars' characterisation of the *Myth of the Given* and argument for the mythical nature of such Givens is tied to various claims about the nature of inferences and propositions. Furthermore, it is tied to particular treatments of the content of perception. As we will see in chapter 2, I intend my use of the *Myth of the Given* to be applicable in areas where we would neither want to talk of propositional content nor be theoretically committed in the way Sellars appears to be.

McDowell's characterisation meets my demand for generality in applying to any account for which both: a) the availability of something to cognition requires possession of a particular capacity or set of capacities (*whatever* the capacities are which enable one to cognise that the something in question is appropriately related to other things); and b) that something features within the account in question as available in the absence of those capacities.

The *Myth of the Given* as I appeal to it is not meant to articulate either an actual obstacle to our acquiring capacities for being in contact with the world, or an obstacle to being in contact with the world. The role of identifying instances of the *Myth of the Given* is, rather, this: if an account contains an instance of the *Myth of the Given*, recognising that it is so highlights a tension in the relation between concept-use and the criteria for concept-use which is internal to that account.

The tension is that, by the lights of whichever account is in question, sensitivity to the grounds for grasping criteria for concept-use would be impossible unless we invoke in the grounds for the criteria some mystical power to intimate to us, or imbue us with the capacity to cognize, the way in which it *is* the grounds for such criteria. If in one's account of how mind and world relate there is some relation to the world instantiating the *Myth of the Given*, then one must be either on the one hand taking something to exert normative force which upon that account is *ex hypothesi* without a way to exert

normative force, or, on the other hand, mis-characterising the capacities which subjects already have.

Allowing *Mythical Givens* is thus only a symptom of holding that there are *intrinsic sources of normative authority* (inasmuch as it is such a symptom, it is hypothetically linked to, or externally related to, holding that there are *intrinsic sources of normative authority*): we might hold that there are *intrinsic sources of normative authority* and that we somehow already have the cognitive capacities which would allow us to establish that there are such sources. Note, however, that holding this would not be to privilege normative authority in an explanation of our normative practices – rather it would be to hold a no-priority view (cf. 1.33). Alternatively, we might hold that there are no such things as intrinsic sources of normative authority but still fall prey to the *Myth of the Given* by assuming the intelligibility of a notion of some other class of individuals without accounting for our possession of the proper cognitive prerequisites.

### **1.32 Privileging Normative Force**

An explanation which privileges normative force is one given by any account of our normative practices upon which the world we refer to is referable to only in virtue of parts of it being individuated in accordance with some independently intelligible system of norms; that is, any view that holds that parts of the world may be somehow 'brought into view' in virtue of their accord with, or creation by, some system of norms which is intelligible in the absence of that to which it applies. (An example of such an explanation would be forms of antirealism which hold that we *project* onto the world, or Kantian theories upon which the categories of the understanding are metaphysically prior to the constituents of the empirical world).

Returning to the example of the metric system of measuring length; an explanation of such a system in terms of privileged normative force might run like this: to inaugurate a system of measurement in terms of metres by picking out a standard for correctness for metre-hood, one must first have a command of the concept of length. Having a command of the concept of length is having command of a set of rules which can be applied to the ordering of objects in terms of the size of their extensions. So in this sense, a command of a system of norms is prior to the possibility of identifying a

determinate – the standard bearer for metre-hood.

To turn an explanation of the above sort into an account which held that normative force is ultimately prior to normative authority one would take a relation of the form described above, between the criterion for the correctness of the use of the concept 'metre' and the background rules which allowed us to articulate such a criterion, to exist at the most basic level of our contact with the world. There would be, on such a picture, for any given individuation, some prior set, or sets, of rules which enable us to individuate thusly.

Any such account, I take it, runs into a form of *the rule following problem*. My use of this latter phrase draws on the paradox expressed by Wittgenstein at *PI* 201.

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.

It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it.

The problem expressed here is, I take it, this: *if* one expects rules to determine what does and what does not count as the correct application of a concept, *then* one will find this expectation undermined because for any given rule, there are an indeterminate array of ways of applying it, and the only way to bring fixity to this situation if we are privileging normative force would be to invoke another rule, which would itself be indeterminate in the very same manner.

I am not, though, putting forward *PI* 201 as presenting a philosophical problem (that “every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule”(*ibid*)) and its answer (that we should abandon the idea that there is any objective constraint upon what counts as correct and what does not; that the matter of correctness is one for which there is no higher tribunal than our conventions), for to do so would be exactly to

accept, under a different guise, a view upon which normative force was prior to normative authority. Rather, in the same way as I did with the *Myth of the Given*, I am putting forward the rule following problem as a problem which is internal to the project of attempting to find an objective constraint upon what counts as correct by appealing to an independently intelligible system of norms.

### **1.33 A No-Priority View**

Recall that '*no priority view*' names the view that neither normative force nor normative authority ought to have priority in explanations of our normative practices. To put the matter another way, the view is that making sense of normative authorities – things like the standard metre in Paris – requires situating those authorities within a context in which things can be held accountable to one another, and that to make sense of normative force – there being a mode by which things are held accountable to one another – one has to have some standards to be accountable to, which latter imperative itself requires some normative authorities.

There is, however, more than one way of taking up – or at least *appearing* to take up – a no priority view. Even if one thinks that neither normative force nor normative authority ought to be privileged – that each is required for the other's description – one might still think that each is intelligible independently of the existence each other.

One might, for instance, in place of the story of 1.32, think that the realm of substance and the realm of norms are metaphysically independent, but that the intelligibility of each depends upon the intelligibility of the other. On such a view, to speak of substance one has to be in accord with some norms; whilst, likewise, to describe those norms one needs to make reference to what those norms govern viz., our relation to substance. On this sort of picture, then, the metaphor of being trapped within the realm of meaning takes hold. For, if we take it that meaning involves both substance and norms, and each is unintelligible to us in the absence of the other, to explain any one semantic item would always take the use of other semantic items which can similarly only be explained from within the realm of meaning. For this reason, accepting such a *no priority view* appears to entail accepting an epistemological limitation upon our

theorising about normativity; it draws a bound to sense.<sup>3</sup>

Alternatively, in place of the story told at 1.31, one might think that there are things which are intrinsic or determinate normative authorities, but that these authorities themselves exert no normative force; rather, that we have a system of representations of normative authorities and it is between these representations, and only between these representations, that normative force is exerted. For instance, consider the thought that our concepts on the whole isomorphically mirror the objective way the world is, but are, in some merely causal way, dependent upon the world for their content.<sup>4</sup>

Considering these options may make it look like I have, in the previous two subsections, been presenting problems with straw men. Given that there are philosophical pictures which do not instantiate the sorts of privileging outlined in the previous two subsections, it may at least seem as though I am drawing a useless distinction; that I am drawing a distinction which does not distinguish the picture I endorse from those I wish to reject. To take this at face value would, however, be to misconstrue the dialogical role of making explicit what privileging normative force and privileging normative authority amounts to, and results in, in those situations such as those which I outlined in 1.31 and 1.32.

It is worth making this clear. The reason for considering the most basic way of privileging normative force and normative authority was to bring out in the clearest manner the structural deficits which go hand in hand with either taking normativity to be an intrinsic property of objects or rules, or norms to be at some level *sui generis*; it was to make some particular kinds of mistake explicit; it was not to set out positions which I will be arguing against.

My contention is, rather, that the structural deficits (like the *Myth of the Given*, the

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<sup>3</sup> For a more concrete example see Sacks' and Read's visions of the later Wittgenstein as, respectively, a transcendental idealist, and as a philosopher who is limiting what he says in light of the sort of self-limiting idea of meaning just outlined, above (cf. 3.21-3.4, 4.13).

<sup>4</sup> For slightly richer examples, imagine: a brute causal-externalism about our most basic thoughts and only our most basic thoughts; or, a world in which our veridical apprehension of most of the objective features of the world we are privy to is constituted by representations fashioned by our evolutionary history.

indeterminacy of fixing rules with rules, and the contentlessness of private languages) which find their clearest exemplification in such simple pictures as those outlined in 1.31 and 1.32, above (pictures where the intrinsic nature of normativity and *sui generis* nature of rules is obvious and global), reside within more subtle philosophical pictures (pictures which do not aim straightforwardly to *explain* our normative lives).

I will be arguing that such deficits are to be found within any picture which allows that there is still the conceptual space for a scheme-content dichotomy, because it is allowing such a conceptual space which detaches particular instances of normative authority from the context which allows them normative force (this thought will not come to full fruition until chapter 4). It is this capacity for the detachment of normative force from normative authority which I think serves to distinguish desirable *no priority views* from undesirable ones; and it is this sort of detachment of which rule-following problems and *mythical Givens* are symptomatic.

In making clearer both this distinction and how the undesirable cases are masked as desirable, it is helpful to appeal to a distinction within types of scheme-content dichotomy drawn by Child (1994). The distinction in question is between scheme-world dualisms and scheme-experience dualisms:

- Scheme-World Dualisms (S-W): “the world has an intrinsic structure (or lack of structure) wholly independent of the structure of the concepts we use to describe it.” (*op. cit.*; 59)
- Scheme-Experience Dualisms (S-E): The mind “construct[s] a conceptual scheme from world independent resources” (*op. cit.*; 68 )

Having this distinction is helpful, because with it in hand we can articulate an asymmetry which underlies the difference between what I am terming desirable and undesirable *no priority views*: a rejection of scheme-world dualisms entails a rejection of scheme-experience dualisms, because excluding scheme-world dualisms precludes any external relation or weakly internal relation between scheme and world, and a scheme-experience dualism is an instance of such an external, or weakly internal, relation; rejecting scheme-experience dualisms does not entail a rejection of scheme-

world dualisms because rejecting scheme-experience dualisms only precludes a particular sort of external relation, or weakly internal relation, between scheme and world.

Furthermore, with this distinction in hand, we can frame the above contrast between desirable and undesirable *no priority views* as follows: the view I endorse – the desirable – is a rejection of both scheme-world dualisms and scheme-experience dualisms. On the view I am advancing there is no conceptual space for *either* dualism because normative authority and normative force are strongly internally related, whereas the only sort of dualism which is precluded by those who would hold a *no priority view* but hold that normative force and normative authority are independently intelligible, or metaphysically independent of each other but not independently intelligible (that is, views upon which normative force and normative authority are weakly internally related), is scheme-experience dualism. So in such cases the conceptual space for a scheme-world dualism is left open.

This undesirable way of dealing with the relation between scheme and content is the common denominator in the broad family of philosophical pictures I will call 'transcendental idealist'. Kantian transcendental idealism does maintain both a scheme-world dualism and a scheme-experience dualism by privileging normative force (and is thus an exemplar of the position outlined in 1.32). Kantian transcendental idealism is such an exemplar, however, in a way which makes it a limiting case of pictures which tacitly accept scheme-world dualisms whilst rejecting scheme-experience dualisms. For, as the world we experience upon such a picture (the empirical world), is a product of the interaction between *the categories* (our conceptual scheme) and the noumenal world, such a transcendental idealist is only committed to a scheme-experience dualism because of the claim that the categories are metaphysically independent of the empirical world. As we will see in more detail in chapters 3 and 4, dropping the claim that the categories are independent of the empirical world would thus result in a denial of scheme-experience dualisms (for the categories are then comprised of content) whilst still maintaining, or at least leaving the conceptual space open for, a scheme-world dualism.

In the above manner, by dropping the idea of a difference in kind between the



categories and the empirical world (cf. 3.2), or by dropping the idea of a noumenal world (cf. 3.32-3.33), variants upon the transcendental idealist pictures appear to rid themselves of the need to explain normative force in terms of normative authority, or vice versa, whilst still unfortunately containing the deficits identified above in 1.31 and 1.32.

In 1.31 and 1.32 I presented two simple philosophical pictures of which particular deficits were constitutive (inasmuch as they were globally present within such pictures). Identifying such deficits operating within more subtle philosophical pictures in more local ways (such as we do when identifying instances of the *myth of the Given*), then, presents us with a point from which to work back. What I want to work back to are tacit ways of thinking of normativity, or a lack of normativity, within those pictures which are an obstacle to relating normative authority and normative force. Identifying such obstacles, then, will serve to undermine the idea that such pictures simply present our normative capacities just as they are.

### **1.34 Normative Context and Logical Space**

Before I move onto the application of the above ideas to language and perception, respectively, I want to draw on the forgoing to introduce three more pieces of terminology which are useful when talking about the interaction of normative force and normative authority.

If there are some determinables, and if to be a determinable is to be in some relation of accountability to some determinates or other determinables, we can say that there are normative nodes:

**Normative Nodes:** any particular such that, in order for it to be intelligible to us, it must be situated in a relation of accountability to something else.

If there are normative nodes then things like washing machines and pride are both normative nodes; for a washing machine to be what it is, it must bear normative relations to other normative nodes – like clean clothes – and pride is likewise only what it is if it is accountable to other normative nodes, like attitudes. Obviously, if

there is such a thing as a *normative node*, there must be more than one such thing. Call such a set of nodes which allow a particular node intelligibility that node's **normative context**.

**Normative Context:** the normative nodes and relations between normative nodes which one would appeal to to describe a particular normative node.

Normative contexts thought of in the above manner are descriptions of a set of internal relations made by reference to a particular node, or particular set of nodes. We might also want to talk of a set of normative nodes which are all internally related to one another and can thus provide each other with a normative context; call such a set a *logical space*.

**Logical Space:** a set of relations which allows a common kind of accountability between a set of normative nodes.

Now that we have the above terminology and thoughts about the links between accountability, intelligibility, internal and external relations, and normativity in hand, I want to examine how these thoughts apply to a particular sort of language use: *descriptive* language use. I will do so with a view to bringing out how the problems identified in the simple philosophical pictures of 1.31-1.33 can arise when we attempt to explain the normativity inherent within such language use.

#### **1.4 Normativity and Descriptive Language Use**

I will here be concerned with descriptive language use because I take it to be quite clear that the constituents of language so used certainly would not be the things they are if they did not bear at least some sort of normative relation to other intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic things; this is true at least inasmuch as sentences are unintelligible in isolation from the normative context set by the language of which they are a part, and are made true or false by the way the world is.

By thus starting with language we will be able to demonstrate more clearly what would be wrong with privileging either normative force or normative authority. Once this

identification is done, we will be in a position from which to see how the tension between authority and force has a more general application than just to explanations concerning language, and will have started to clear the path towards identifying what it will take to privilege neither normative force nor normative authority in more general circumstances.

Certain descriptive uses of language have such a use in virtue of their propensity to succeed or fail in expressing the way things are. Here the idea of a normative node applies immediately: for a descriptive sentence to have a use it must be checkable against something else; that is, we cannot make sense of what it is to be a meaningful descriptive term unless we take into account its accountability to what it is about.

What resources would it take to use descriptive language if descriptive language is to be like this? One clear resource amounts to a notion of objectivity: in order to make sense of 'checking', the user must be in command of, as McDowell (2001) puts it,

...the idea of things being thus and such anyway, whether or not we choose to investigate the matter in question, and whatever the outcome of any such investigation. That idea requires the conception of how things could correctly be said to be anyway—whatever, if anything, we in fact go on to say about the matter. (McDowell, 2001; 222)

That is, according to this view, a key sort of language use is inherently normative in the simple sense that to understand it one has to believe that its instances aim to present the way things are independently of how we may think they are; otherwise put, one has to see the object of description as being a normative authority.

#### **1.41 A Qualification Regarding the Accountability of Language to the World**

My assent to the idea that a key aspect of the inherent normativity of language can be seen by observing the accountability of descriptions to the way things are may seem to be discordant with my earlier claims. It might seem that, because this idea requires the accountability of language use to something extra-linguistic, it requires an accountability of thoughts about the world to normatively bare criteria (and thus, errs either by allowing something anormative to have normative force, or by privileging

normative force in allowing that it imbues the anormative with normative authority).

Worse still, my assent to the idea of the world providing criteria for some descriptive language use might look to be a totalising claim about language's capacity for meaning: it might appear that I am claiming that case that language is meaningful only if it can be compared to the world.

It is part of the purpose of this thesis to show that it is a mistake to make inferences which make the accountability of some language-use to the world lead to conclusions to the effect that there is accountability of some (or, worse, all) language use to anormative criteria; that is, to show that mistaken inferences such as the following are in play:

- a) An inference from the idea that *extra-linguistic* individuals can be normative authorities to the idea that *anormative* individuals can be normative authorities.
- b) An inference from accountability to the extra-linguistic being a feature of some language-use to the thought that all language-use is underwritten by the accountability of language to the extra-linguistic.

Once we see the inferences in play, I further wish to establish that such inferences are mistaken because they rely upon the following fallacious assumptions:

- a) That the extralinguistic – even the way the world is – is *de facto* anormative (cf. 2 and 5).
- b) That all language-use must have a conceptual unity and so if the descriptive/representative function of language is essential to some language-use it must be the primary/real function of language.

The import and relation of these mistakes and assumptions will be developed in detail throughout this thesis (see in particular, below, 2.5-2.6, 3.3-3.41, 4.13, 5); the point of mentioning them now is to emphasise that looking at our capacity to describe is merely a way of opening up questions regarding the inherent normativity of language, the

connections between this sort of normativity and normativity in other areas of our lives (for instance, in our perceptual lives (cf. 1.6 and 2)), and, further how to think of the relation between our normative practices and the world, in terms of normative force and normative authority. Making such a claim about the relation of language to the world is not, then, tantamount to making a totalising claim about a normative relation which is constitutive of *the essential* nature of language.

#### **1.42 Normative Contexts and Patterns of Applicability**

To spell out more clearly in what sense language *is* accountable to the world, and how this accountability requires a normative context, I now want to concentrate on an aspect of the earlier quotation from McDowell (2001; 46). In this quotation we see the beginnings of a link being made to the necessity of a normative context, from the inherent accountability of descriptive language use to the way things actually are. Looking back to that quotation, we see that, somehow, the possibility of accountability to the world comes along with having some conception of what “we could in fact go on to say about the matter” (*ibid*).

Why, then, ought we to associate a conception of accountability to the world with what we could go on to say? The way McDowell unpacks the thought is that the notion of correctness we are interested in

...can only be the notion of how a pattern of application that we grasp, when we come to understand the concept in question, extends, independently of the actual outcome of any investigation, to the relevant case. (*ibid*)

The “notion of correctness can only be the notion of how a pattern of application” (*ibid*) extends because of a second sense in which meaningful parts of descriptive language are necessarily normative nodes. The thought, I take it, is this: the pattern of application of any part of descriptive language is constituted by synchronic and diachronic relations between the uses of that part of language, other parts of language, and the world. Given these relations, that the related uses are different uses of the same part of language (rather than just homonyms) is shown by looking to their occupation of a similar place within a network of related inferences, usages, and associations.

I will leave the diachronic element until later because the relation is not normative in quite the same way (cf. 1.43). An elaboration of the above thought about synchronic relations can be found in Brandom (2010; 29): as he says, concepts “belong within networks in which a range of connections and distinctions are discriminated”, where being connected is standing “in modally robust relations of material consequence and incompatibility” to other concepts.

For an example of these sorts of counterfactual connections, consider the following: if something falls under the concept *green* a material consequence is that that thing also falls under the concept *colour*. Furthermore if we attribute greenness to something, it would be incompatible to attribute redness to the very same portion of the same thing at the same time. Naming a green thing, then, depends upon grasping that these modal relations form part of the stage-setting for naming, or, in other words, part of the appropriate normative context.

Now, to make sense of distinctions between concepts we need criteria of individuation. The respect in which a concept is the same as or different from others just is whether it differs in its connections to other concepts, and so in its worldly application. So, to individuate, we need to trace out such relations as compatibility and exclusion, and, in doing so, we must talk about the sort of connections just mentioned by invoking and using modal concepts. That is, we need a sense of how possible situations might vary whilst counting a thing to fall under the *same* concept, and we need a sense of what would *follow* if the concept were to obtain. We ought here to think of something like the capacity expressed by Evans' 'generality constraint':

... if a subject can be credited with the thought that a is F, then he must have the conceptual resources for entertaining the thought that a is G, for every property of being G of which he has a conception. (1982; 104)

Here, 'entertaining' is not taken to commit the thinker to crediting every entertaining as an entertaining of a proposition with sense, but rather just with the capacity to consider such combinations in order to feel out which have the capacity for use and which do not (our capacity to do this sort of *entertaining* will be revisited in a different light in

4.24-4.25, and play a role in establishing the claims made at 4.3).<sup>5</sup>

It is important to think of 'entertaining' in this way, for if we do not, and if instead, we read Evans as claiming that every concept must be applicable to every potential referent, we thereby import a theory of language which causes clear problems. For example, we might be forced to allow that there must already be sense to phrases like 'tuesday is green' or 'Sally is an irrational number' rather than merely allowing that we *could* give such phrases sense or refrain from giving them sense.

If we are to accept the sort of minimally inferentialist story I have been explicating from McDowell's quotation,<sup>6</sup> then we must have already accepted an interdependence underwritten by modal relations: discrimination relies on the possibility of differentiation, which in turn relies on there being some criteria of individuation. We gain these criteria by looking for differences in connections to other concepts – differences in what would and would not follow. However, we can only talk about connections if we have some concepts to compare, concepts which in turn rely upon the prior individuation of other concepts. In this sense, “the use of concepts requires a sense of their modal dimension” (Baldwin 2002; 6); it does so inasmuch as a concept's use is internally related to its modal dimension (where it fits into in the modal nexus of language and the world), and this modal dimension is articulated by recourse to some criteria for the concept's use, and required for the articulation of such criteria. Whatever sets the criteria is then, in the same way as the criteria for being a football was seen to be (cf. 1.2), a normative authority. To make sense of the criteria we must look to whatever they bear salient modal relations to – to the normative context of the concept.

Here, then, we have an interesting convergence of a very basic sort of modality and a notion of understanding: the modal connections which constitute concepts are the very same connections which one would use to spell out what one ought to understand if one understands a concept. This thought needs to be appreciated along with a key point of section 1.4: that the modal connections which objects commit us to are how they

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<sup>5</sup> This is not to make any exegetical claim about what Evans meant. It is just to stipulate how we need to read the constraint Evans articulated if it is to be useful to us.

<sup>6</sup> I am calling it minimally inferentialist because I am not here endorsing inferentialism (the thesis that the meaning of a concept *is* the inferential role it plays), but rather the more weaker claim that we must appeal to inferential roles to describe the content of linguistic description.

are largely irrespectively of how we take them to be.<sup>7</sup> The sort of modal nexus in question objectively outstrips a subject's comprehension of it (or at least must be able to). In the same way, when we use descriptive language, our commitments to that use's synchronic relations (relations of entailment and exclusion) to other parts of language must, in most circumstances, be capable of outstripping our awareness of what we are committed to. In order for any given use of a concept to be understood, the modal nexus of language use in which concepts are situated must be understood to be objective in a like manner to objects.

I will return to the link between our idea of objectivity and the way in which the synchronic relations of language outstrip our usage in a few paragraphs' time. First, I want to make clear that we can certainly tell the same story as I have just outlined for all other basic empirical concepts, because to be an empirical concept is to hold a place in the logical space of modal relations between physical things; for instance, for the notion of an *object*, we have to have the notion of *space*, and we have to understand that objects of the same type cannot co-exist in the same spatio-temporal region (these relations are the sorts of internal relation which would be descriptive of Carnap's system of space and time mentioned in 1.2).

Given the aforementioned dependence between the deployment of empirical concepts and an awareness of a wider modal nexus, a further insight into the modal nature of empirical concepts can be gained by considering the very possibility of empirical investigation – a possibility which must be realised in order for there to be concepts with empirical content at all. Empirical investigation relies upon a pre-established network of possibilities. Think, for example, of the status of apparatus in an experiment: we can think of the apparatus utilised in a particular experiment as a network of related possibilities being held fixed in order that we find out what it means to vary some particular variable; that is, we find out how what is varied relates to what is observed *only* given that everything else is held fixed.

So here again, we see a dependence between a modal nexus and a thing we are

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<sup>7</sup> I qualify with '*largely*' because there are important respects in which what we believe is implicated in how we individuate what it is we can possibly be referring to. This point will not be fully developed until the end of this thesis, but it does not affect the point being made here, which is that – for the requisite objectivity – there must be the capacity for what we believe and how things are to come apart.



observing which mirrors the general dependence between the individuation and connection of concepts, and points to the deep role of a command of modal notions. We must have some prior notion of modality in order that we can investigate anything actual at all. This gives us a particular sense in which internal relations are prerequisites of external relations in the general way Wittgenstein expressed at *PR* 66 (quoted towards the end of 1.1).

Being 'in touch with the world', then, is a matter of being aware that we are in touch with objects whose properties make them appropriate targets for *some* concept use, and not others; further, having such awareness requires a command of a modal nexus which outstrips our appreciation of it – as McDowell puts it:

A normative context is necessary for the idea of being in touch with the world at all, whether knowledgeably or not (McDowell 1996; xiv)

We must, then, have some sort of appreciation of our position with regard to the modal nexus we inhabit if we are to command concepts at all. Intuitively, this would involve some contact with normative authorities, given that it is contact with such objects as normative authorities which shows us that there is more to any given object than we are immediately aware of, and underwrites some of the exclusion and entailment relations between parts of our descriptive language.

### **1.43 Diachronic Relations and Conceptual Novelty**

It is from the foregoing thought – that an appreciation of a modal-cum-normative context which outstrips our grasp of it is a prerequisite of concept application – that I want to make the link to diachronic relations between descriptive language use.

In Evan's generality constraint we briefly saw expression of one sort of diachronic relation: that of our ability to identify sameness of concept in virtue of some part of language use occupying a similar position with regard to its synchronic relations to another use within a different normative context. To take an oversimplified example, we may judge that the green of a leaf is the same as the green of a depicted leaf we see at some later time in virtue of each colour occupying a similar place in a nexus of

similarity and difference relations to other colours.

Another sort of diachronic relation, which I will focus on here, is between the canonical use of some descriptive language and the use of that same part of language in a novel way. I want to bring out how this sort of diachronic relation first seems more problematic than the aforementioned sort inasmuch as it seems to be different in kind. I will suggest, however, that such a usage is in fact no more or less problematic because it is not in fact different in kind; it is only different in degree. For this reason examining such cases provides another good heuristic tool (in addition to the simple philosophical pictures examined earlier), with which to bring out the problems surrounding the relating of normative force and normative authority in any diachronic relation.

What I have in mind are just the sorts of cases which were up for being endowed with, or denied, sense when we considered *the generality constraint* and our capacity for entertaining the recombination of concepts, earlier. Such cases which have already been and gone, and have been endowed with sense, are, for instance: 'Barry is feeling blue'; 'Barry has kicked the bucket'; 'Barry has been dropped from the team'; 'Barry is fishing for compliments'; 'Barry is the pilot of the plane'.

The only issue I want to bring to the fore by examining these sorts of novel usages of established concepts is to show an obstacle to our being in a position to make sense of such novel utterances applying to anything at all for those who take norms and the empirical world to be externally related.<sup>8</sup> The obstacle is the apparent need to answer the following question: how can we make sense of our ability to use concepts which are seemingly the concepts they are because of a relation to some empirical criteria within a situation in which such a concept seems to lack the capacity to bear a clear relation to any such empirical criteria?

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<sup>8</sup> That is, in addressing novel concept application in this general way I am not intending to address any of the following: the issue of whether these phrases are conceptually unified in any way other than under the problem I am about to articulate; the wider issue of how to distinguish the figurative from the literal, or rhetorical from the logical; whether the words before and after their successful novel deployment are expressing what is essentially the same concept; and whether different kinds of novel extension (for instance, metonymic, ironic, metaphorical) are afflicted by the same problem as I am about to illustrate, or, if they are, whether they are afflicted in exactly the same way.

The issue with allowing the novel use of a concept an appropriate relation to a normative authority is, then, as follows. The picture of descriptive language use we have painted so far has at its core the accountability of that language to the empirical world. To be *accountable* to the world, such language must be of a form which is *applicable* to the empirical world. Being of such a form, we have seen, would seem to be a matter of being modally articulated in much the the same way as the target of the description. For instance a green thing is more similar to blue things than red things and cannot be red; and so if we are committed to the the thought that an object is green we are also committed to the thought that it is not red and that it is more like blue things than red things. To be a normative authority, the object's modal nature ought to be able to play a role in setting the criteria for concept use (*i.e.* the object ought to be able to exert normative force); but, given that there is no precedent for such a usage, the empirical world can play no such role, and so how the novel usage has applicable content is mysterious.

Even though the empirical objects to which canonical descriptive language use is accountable cannot provide the criteria for the application of a novel use of a concept, however, we do not want to say that the modal nexus of accountability surrounding the canonical use of a concept plays no role in making a novel use of that concept available, for the following reasons.

Take, for instance, 'Barry is the pilot of the plane'. Consider the use of this sentence which pioneered the transition from the prior use of 'pilot' (the person who steers a boat) to the current use of 'pilot' (the person who flies a plane); the user would be maintaining that Barry is related to the plane as, hitherto, pilots had been related to ships. To understand this would require ignoring all of the relations previous uses of 'pilot' would have borne to their contexts, which if taken to be essential to the concept 'pilot', would be in conflict with the possibility of attributing the concept 'pilot' to the flyer of an aeroplane. If the two uses of 'pilot' are taken to be uses of the same concept, then, being in command of a vessel must seem to be internally related to, or essential to, the concept, whilst the hitherto exclusive application of the term to water-vessels would have to be taken to be accidental.

The point of the discussion so far, then, is threefold: 1) novel extensions could not be

made if the normative context surrounding the canonical usage had not been so; 2) use of a concept in a novel situation requires counting certain relations the concept has borne to the world and other concepts to be accidental or external, and some to be essential or internal; 3) the normative context surrounding the canonical usage cannot justify the novel deployment of a concept. (1) asserts an internal relation between the empirical world and novel concept use; (2) asserts that there is normativity at play – for the concept to be understood in the appropriate way, certain relations must be taken to be essential and certain relations must be taken to be accidental; (3) asserts that the connection is arbitrary - nothing about the empirical world could necessitate which relations must be taken to be essential, and certain relations must be taken to be accidental.

There thus seems to be tension between the internal relation of (1) and the arbitrariness of (3), which revolves around the question of what gives the norms operative in (2) their force. In view of the above description, if we take novel concept applications to be meaningful because they have descriptive content (content which can be found to be true or false according to some criteria), and we take normative authority and force to be externally or weakly internally related, it is difficult not to privilege either normative force or normative authority. For it seems apparent that in such situations the normative authorities are being made available by the application of some prior rule which outstrips the empirical uses to which it has been hitherto applied; or the subject of the novel usages must somehow have guided us in our application of rules which we already have.

This difficulty is only intensified when we note that there is no clean way to distinguish between the diachronic and synchronic relations between parts of language: because every instance of concept use is made in a different context to any prior use, we must perpetually pick out which relations are salient and which are not. So there is no hard and fast distinction to make between the canonical and the novel. Rather, all we have are varying degrees of novelty at each instance of a diachronic relation.

Novel rule application, then, *epitomises* a problem for any account of an external relation, or weakly internal relation, between concepts and their criteria for application in this way: even if we had a contingently correct bridging principle for all of the

hitherto canonical cases of rule application, this would not, in principle, work for novel cases. For such a principle to work it would have to be not only contingently applicable to all of the previous cases of rule use, but also applicable to any possible future case. For such a guarantee we would have to invoke more rules to guarantee the application (initiating a regress) or invoke instances of the *myth of the Given* in allowing that new cases make obvious to us which rules to use. If we then admit that, to some degree, all descriptive language use, or perception of things as things, relies upon norms obtaining in diachronic relations to novel situations, we see that this is a problem for any account of an external relation, or weakly internal relation, between concepts and their criteria for application.

There is a pithy expression of the apparent mystery here in *PI*:

...we understand the meaning of a word when we hear or say it; we grasp it in a flash, and what we grasp in this way is surely something different from the 'use' which is extended in time! (PI 138)

That is, if we think of language and the world as externally related, or weakly internally related, then at every *instance* of use or *grasp of a use*, a theoretical explanation is required which would explain its correctness.

So, if we presume that there is an external relation or weakly internal relation between parts of descriptive language and the parts of the world which serve as criteria for those descriptions, 'grasping in a flash' is not to be seen just as a difficult theoretical task that we can perhaps eventually describe our clever practical solution to (as language users). 'Grasping in a flash' looks to be a problem *in principle*. For to 'grasp in a flash', a language user would have to be either in command of a set of rules which cannot be grounded in the empirical world – for they outstrip every empirical situation whilst still being applicable to the empirical world, or else she would have to be guided in her application of novel rules by the way the world is.

## **1.5 Problems**

So, in summary, if we are to grasp name-bearers as normative authorities, we must

grasp that they are *objectively* so. This requires more than mere accord with the rules. That is, more is required than the embodiment of the appropriate counterfactual in our behaviours by, for instance, reacting as one ought to when prompted by stimulus; it requires, as we saw above (1.4-1.43), grasping (in a practical way, at least) that one's own reactions are situated within a modal nexus which outstrips one's own conception of it.

Given this, quite how we are in a position to use language starts again to look mysterious. For, if we take the empirical world to have merely causal efficacy, and we also require that our contact with the world informs us of its modal multiplicity (and we must be so informed if we are to be able to think about it), then we require more of the world than it can give. Being at the distal end of a causal chain cannot put us in a position to appreciate our place within a web of modals if we accept that parts of a merely causal chain are anormative (as we must if we think normative force and normative authority are externally related). On the other hand, if – even for our most basic concepts – we already had to have a grasp of the modal nexus of language use prior to contact with the grounding for such a grasp, this too seems odd. (If our grasp of the appropriate modals were to be intelligible independently of the instantiations of those modals we would be privileging normative force in the way exemplified, and problematised, in 1.32).

### **1.51 Modal Content, the *Myth of The Given*, and *Rule-Following***

Let us now have a closer look at the problems I have just outlined in terms of modals, and relate them to how the problems I identified with privileging either normative authority, or normative force (sketched at 1.31 and 1.32, respectively) can be manifested within a picture of language which ultimately privileges neither.

First let us refresh the points of 1.31 and 1.32 with respect to language and modals. Individuating the bearer of a name involves locating it within a modal nexus which is spread across space and time; one might think that we can simply look to the things we are talking about to gain the requisite grasp of their place within the modal nexus. This, however, would be to do a disservice to the deepness of the claim that a normative context is required in order to have contact with the world. For, if the above

considerations about descriptive language hold, then, in the same way as an appreciation of salient respects in which one thing resembled another was a prerequisite of individuating footballs as footballs, an appreciation of the relation between an appropriate pattern and an object which satisfies that pattern is a prerequisite of naming that object. Here is something akin to the thought that,

...a great deal of stage-setting in the language is presupposed if the mere act of naming is to make sense. And when we speak of someone's having given a name to [an x], what is presupposed is the existence of the grammar of the word ['x']; it shews the post where the new word is stationed. (PI 257; my square brackets)

On the other hand one might think that it is *we* that bring the modal backdrop to bear upon the world by bringing *our* autonomous (in the sense of world-independent) grammar to bear upon it. If we take this route, however, in privileging normative force we meet with the sort of rule following problem outlined at 1.32. In the absence of the possibility of contact with the object being named providing criteria of correctness for the applicability of the norms in question, we are left with the thought that a prior command of grammar (a system of rules) is what allows us to find a 'station' for a new name amidst an objective modal context. Such a thought, however, presupposes the applicability of the system of rules in question to the object that is being named. Nothing about rules themselves, however, tells us how they are to be applied – rules are in this sense indeterminate – so to make sure the rules apply would require an external criterion for correctness; as the only place to look for a criterion, other than the object itself, would be some further set of rules, a vicious regress then threatens.

For the foregoing reasons, we ought to accept a *no priority view*.

We can now, however, provide a more articulated outline of how global problems of the above sort can arise in a local way, within a *no priority view*, by connecting the centrality of modal notions to empirical concepts, and so to descriptive language (discussed in 1.43 above), with the notion of the *Myth of the Given* which I introduced in section 1.31.

If the enabling conditions for making sense of empirical descriptions involves an ability to enquire after something modal, then there is an important connection between accepting the modality of basic empirical concepts, and rejecting anything like the myth of the given. That is, to reiterate, rejecting the notion that we can make sense of “an availability [of something] for cognition to subjects whose getting what is supposedly Given to them does not draw on capacities required for the sort of cognition in question” (McDowell 2008; 1). In other words, for empirical objects to be intelligible to us we must have the capacity to identify those objects by attributing to them modal properties.

The connection plays out like this: if we accept that empirical concepts are necessarily modally imbued, then any candidate for being a Given which involved worldly content would likewise have to be modally imbued. For if we can only make sense of the content of concepts by appreciating their modal relations to other concepts, and we are (for the sake of argument) to accept that the world impresses contentful representations upon us, then we must take it that the world imparts modal information to us.

This sort of 'Given' is clearly undesirable; making sense of it would require that the world is modally structured, and moreover the world is *this* way *and* that it *shows us* that it is; that is, in observing one spatio-temporal portion of the world, our observation of that portion bequeaths us modal information which extends beyond the portion of the modal structure we are observing. Such *Givens'* normative force, and so also their ability to be a normative authority, is indeed mythical; there is a deficit in the account concerning how normative force and normative authority relate which is being filled with a normative authority which has the power to intimate to us that that is how it is.

So, allowing that we accept that the idea of such a Given is mythical, and so undesirable, we have these explanatory options left as regards the normative force of normative authorities:

- The world is amodal (modally bereft), and this fact precludes the possibility of name-bearers intimating their place in a modal nexus to us in any way - the world thus conceived does not have the capacity to do so. Thus, modality, and its normative force, is something which *we* bring to the world.



- The world is modally structured, but we cannot be privy to this until we are suitably configured (we must already have the tools which make the world's modal structure perspicuous).

*Prima facie*, neither the idea that modality is something we project onto the world, nor the idea that the world is modally rich, look to be of any help in elucidating how normative authorities can have normative force. For the world conceived of in the first manner cannot itself be a normative authority for modal claims (it cannot make modal claims true),<sup>9</sup> whilst the world conceived of in the second manner could only help relate normative authority and normative force if it could display to us its place in the modal nexus. However, in order for what this latter clause expresses to be possible we would already have to be in a position to see the world as grounds for the particular modal information we use, so we would need an explanation of how our command of modals and the modal structure of the world relate.

This is not to say that we should give an explanation of how we do come to see the world as modal. Rather it is to say that the above pictures have built into them discontinuities between normative authority and normative force which, if we are to maintain those pictures, need to be made continuous by way of an explanation which identifies a further relation or relata. Accepting such pictures, then, brings with it the onus to explain, not how we came to occupy a place in the modal-cum-normative nexus of the world, but how the parts of this nexus could exert normative force upon one another and us. Put differently, these pictures as they stand give us the 'is' but not the 'ought', and they make the 'ought' look like an added ingredient.

The added ingredient an explanation of normative force in the above pictures requires is a bridging principle to account for the accord between our capacities and the way the world is. It is worth considering what could accomplish this bridging. If it is a rule pertaining to concept use, then we have the problems exemplified by pictures that privilege normative force. If it is an object, then we have to account for its normative force (which would lead us to the same set of problems as we have unpacked here).

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<sup>9</sup> One might still object, perhaps, that the amodal world could simply cause us to have such concepts; I leave this aside for now, however, because I think it is unintelligible for reasons to come in the last chapter of this thesis.

In summary: the above two options are the only options available if we (even tacitly) presume an external relation, or weakly internal relation, between our descriptive language and the way the world is (between scheme and content). So, if we buy into the idea of an external relation, or weakly internal relation, between scheme and content, we are pressed to ask (given that we cannot explain modality and normativity away) how we can coherently think of the world and our practices in such a way that the world can exert normative force upon our descriptive language.

## **1.6 A Link to Chapter 2**

For our use of descriptive language to be unproblematic there must be no mystery concerning how the normative context which is a precondition for descriptive language use could allow normative authorities – which are required for our descriptive language use – to exert normative force.

In the next chapter I will make analogous moves to those made in this chapter but at a more fundamental level of normative context. I will present an argument which establishes that a particular sort of perceptual experience we have is thoroughly modally and normatively imbued. I will then show that grounding these norms can neither be a matter of looking to the objects which feature in those perceptual experiences, nor can it be a matter of looking to some system of norms which is intelligible independently of the objects which those norms are supposed to put us into perceptual contact with. In order to avoid such problems, I will sketch a way of thinking of objects and our normative practices as strongly internally related.

Examining linguistic description has, then, provided this way in to a wider examination of our normative lives: the normative accountability required for linguistic description depends upon our capacity to name things in order that those things can be normative authorities for our descriptions; and our capacity to name things – at a basic level of descriptive language use – depends upon our ability to pick out perceptually-experienced individuals as candidates for being a normative authority. The forgoing points set the scene for the next chapter's claim, which is that being able to pick out individuals perceptually depends upon those individuals already

occupying a place within a normative context, for if there were not an already normative context, we would be forced to privilege normative force or normative authority.

## **Chapter 2: Seeing and Novelty**

Looking at the lamp upon my desk, I am presented with an object. I move ninety degrees around this object and, although the visual experience I am having is vastly different – in the first instance I see the round rim of the lamp shade which contains the bulb sat upon a flexible pillar which takes a bent, s-shaped, locus from the oval base which has a switch on the left hand portion; whilst in the second I see the funnel shape of the exterior of the lampshade, the flexible pillar taking an entirely different locus, and a base with a switch dead centre. I have no hesitation in taking the object presented at each instance as being one and the same object, and I am not surprised by the qualitative change (in fact, I would be surprised if there were no change; if, when moving around an object's location, my visual experience did not change at all, then it would be an odd experience indeed).

Given the possible degree of difference between views upon the same object from different positions relative to that object (different points of view), the lack of surprise experienced when the difference becomes apparent might seem to be an odd fact about perceiving objects. It would seem that we are constantly presented with novelty and constantly take it in our stride – we appropriately associate our present sensory experience with other possible present sensory experiences, past experiences, and possible future experiences. If this is the case, we ought to wonder what accounts for our capacity to make the appropriate associations; that is, in virtue of what do we associate our present perceptual experience with absent, or possible, perceptual experiences?

The problem at hand is, I think, a problem akin in form to the problem of how to relate normative force and normative authority with regard to linguistic description. We ought to be able to say what grounds the appropriate association of different experiences of the same object – to identify the proper normative authority – and say what allows these grounds to do their grounding; to describe how normative authorities have normative force. Furthermore, it will become clear that, even if no one wants to privilege normative force, or normative authority, nevertheless if we take on a view according to which the system of norms which allows us to perceptually experience objects as objects, and the normative authorities for such experiences – objects – are

externally related, we will be forced to privilege the one or the other.

This chapter is concerned with the normative context (cf. 1.34, 1.6) which is required for demonstrative reference, and so is also required for a capacity to use richer descriptive language. In considering these topics I want to show that, at least with respect to a very basic sort of visual experience – experience of spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects – there is no clear division to be made between the objects of experience and how our experiences of those objects are structured such that we can cleanly discriminate the normative context required for such demonstrative reference from the object pointed at. That is, we must take the objects we experience and the norms which enable us to experience them as internally related.

I want, then, to show that there are internal relations between spatially unified objects, our experience of spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects, and the normative context which enables such experiences. In doing so I will show that, at least as regards the perception of spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects, the perceived property of being an object

...is properly understood as an intensional one, which emerges in the context of understanding the role that is played by the logical constituents of propositions, and it cannot be understood independently of this. (McGinn 2006; 5)

The above quotation may seem to be out of context; after all, it refers to the simple objects of the *Tractatus*. However, once we drop the dogmatism of the *Tractatus* (a move which will feature heavily in the following two chapters), and also follow the line of argument in this chapter, we will see that the thought applies to our perception of spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects, and may well apply to the perceptual experience of other kinds of common or garden objects as those kinds of objects.

More importantly, we will see that there is no way of thinking of any perceived property which is not also a way of thinking of the normative role the property plays in our normative practices; and that, as the objects of perception ground our demonstratives, it is normative 'role players' we are thinking of when we think of the

world we perceive.<sup>10</sup> This way of thinking of both perception of objects and objects themselves is key to making sense of the idea that objects themselves feature in both our perceptual experience, and in our grammar (cf. 2.5-2.6, 4, 5).

This last move will be fundamental to our coming to see that our reference to the world is reference to normative role players, and that this is not just so because of our inability to perceive objects without bestowing a normative role upon part of the merely empirical world. That is, I am not here expressing a view about normative contexts as necessary intermediaries between us and empirical objects, or as necessary tools for bringing us into contact with objects as they are in themselves, because, (as we will start to see in this chapter, and work to by the end of the thesis), there is no tenable distinction to be made between normative role players and empirical objects at the most basic levels of our conceptual lives.

## **2.1 A More Particular Overview**

The more particular focus of this chapter is twofold: first, I want to show that certain approaches which we have seen to be useful (in the previous chapter) when considering the normativity of descriptive language - viz. articulating the content of particular utterances in terms of their place within a modal and normative nexus comprised of synchronic and diachronic relations between the uses of particular concepts - can be fruitfully be applied to the content of perceptual experiences. I will endeavour to detail some of the benefits of applying such approaches in the course of this chapter. My major purpose, however, is to find a way of talking about perceptual experience on which such experience has a normative and modal content, whilst not being propositionally structured or necessarily representational. I am interested in establishing this way of thinking of perception because it is key to thinking of perceptual experience as part of the normative context which provides a background against which practices like representation can take place.

Secondly, once I have made a case for such an idea of perceptual content, I want to make clear that if we attempt to explain the synchronic and diachronic relations

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<sup>10</sup> By 'normative role players' here I mean things which are intelligible in virtue of the place they occupy within a logical space.

between different perceptual experiences by offering a criterion of correctness which is either anormative, or normative in a way which is independent of our practices, much the same sorts of problems arise for the intelligibility of perceptual experience as arose for the intelligibility of descriptive language. These problems are concerned with the possibility of normative authorities having normative force; they are problems which ensue from a presumption that normative authorities and the norms which allow them such authority are either externally related or internally related in a way which is metaphysically mysterious.

What I will seek to demonstrate, then, is that this is a structural problem with any theory which holds that accounting for our experience of objects is a matter of relating two distinct tiers: a level of raw data, and some operation which imbues this data with normative significance. I call this position Dualism and contrast it with a more favourable, but still vulnerable, Monism:

**Dualism:** Our first person visual experience is the combination of some raw visual data and some operation upon that data, which imbues the whole experience (the total phenomenology) with the appropriate normative content.

**Monism:** There is no raw data; visual experience is irreducibly normatively imbued.

By considering the above opposition, we can tell that the problem of describing the mode of the association of the sensory experiences which are implicated in our experience of objects is closely related to a methodological debate concerning a current question in the philosophy of perception: how can we distinguish the properties which are part of our perceptual phenomenology from those which are part of our total phenomenology?<sup>11</sup> That is, how do we tell apart the properties which are actually present in our visual experience from those which, in some undefined sense, come along with it but reside in our wider conscious experience? For example, upon returning home I am confronted with a blue door; that it is blue seems to be a clear feature of my visual experience; that it is the entrance to my home, however, is not so

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<sup>11</sup> See Nanay (2011) for a brief survey and discussion of the orthodox method of doing so, and an argument for what he takes to be a better variation of that method.

obviously experienced visually – it is not so clear that it is part of the content of perception.

I should make clear here that the ideas of the content of perception, perceptual phenomenology, and total phenomenology, are not here being used with a view to getting theoretical characterisations of those ideas right; nor are they being used with a view to showing that they are ideas we ought to get rid of. Rather, I aim to show that the distinction between total phenomenology and perceptual phenomenology can operate as a scheme-experience dualism, and the distinction between what we perceive, and our experience of those objects, can operate as a scheme-world dualism, and that we should avoid uses of these distinctions which allow them to operate in this way. The content of perceptual phenomenology will just turn out to be (normally) unmediated contact with a part of the world which plays a normative role in our practices. The argument I will make in this chapter, then, is one which locates the properties which ground the association of our sensory experiences within our perceptual content, and makes the claim that such properties are described when we describe our perceptual phenomenology; the argument locates the properties in this way because if they were not located thusly, a version of a bad scheme-content dualism would be supposed.

### **2.11 Argument Summary**

The first step in my argument will be to show that experience of modal and normative properties is a prerequisite of experiencing spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects; seeing objects as objects requires a capacity appropriately to associate points of views upon an object, and to use this capacity requires a command of modal and normative information.

The second step will be to show that if we locate the grounds for the association of points of view within the total phenomenology, rather than the perceptual phenomenology (the perceptual content itself) of a perceiving subject, we cannot account for the normativity of the total phenomenology at all. The requisite modal and normative information must be part of the content of perception (however we choose to think of this content), because the normative structure of perception is a prerequisite



of our ability to use concepts; and using concepts is a prerequisite of *interpreting* our experiences according to some norms.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, for a Dualist, what provides the normative force – the system of norms a perceiver interprets with – and the normative authorities for such concepts – the objects perceived – are problematically disconnected. We can see the symptoms of this disconnection, as we did in the case of descriptive language (cf. 1.5-1.51) in the positing of objects that intimate norms or norms which set their own criteria for their own application.

If the above line of argument holds, and we still want to save an account which features such an external relation between our command of the norms which govern our judgements of sensory similarity and difference, and the objects they make perceptually intelligible to us, we would have to explain the availability of the requisite modal and normative information to object experiencers at a level which did not involve our phenomenology at all. I will dismiss one potential way of explaining how the required information is present at the level of our perceptual experience – objects causally effecting our sub-personal processing – and explore another more promising one: giving a selectional story about how we came to process in the way we do. I will show that making this latter move only pushes back the problem we faced at the level of experience, and I will further suggest that this provides us with good grounds for thinking that this involves a regress of the sort we found earlier when thinking about privileging normative force (cf. 1.32). For seeking to explain the norms governing the content of our phenomenology at a lower level of explanation than that at which the content obtains (by which I mean a level prior to the perceptual life of any one individual), either calls that lower level's normative status into question in the same way as the higher level's status was called into question, or provides the requisite normativity by privileging normative authority and thus accepting a self-legitimizing content of a sort analogous to that which we wanted to avoid in the case of linguistic

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<sup>12</sup> Such experiences are a prerequisite of engagement with the empirical world in the sense that a prerequisite of our ability to describe the empirical world is an ability to name objects ostensively, and to name objects ostensively, objects must be experientially present to one as individuals. I thus claim that such experiences are at the normative bedrock. This, together with my claims about the dependence of the content of any experience upon synchronic and diachronic relations to other experiences, is also to claim that the foundations of our ability to use concepts are holistically structured, and that, if we did not have an experience thusly holistically structured, neither would we have the capacity for using the sorts of concepts which we do use.

description (viz., it instantiates instances of *the Myth of the Given*).

Here is a step-by-step summary of the argumentative strategy which I just sketched:

1) Experiencing particular spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects is dependent upon the presence of appropriate modal and normative information.

(2.5)

2) If the content of a subject's experience of spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects is at the level of their total phenomenology but not their visual phenomenology, Dualism is true.

3) If Dualism is true, unless objects can somehow intimate to us the appropriate modal and normative information, we cannot ground the requisite modal and normative information which pertains to the particular objects to which the norms and modals apply.

4) If objects intimate modal and normative information to us through perceptual experience, then the information is either a part of the total phenomenology of a perceptual experience, or part of the visual phenomenology of a perceptual experience.

5) If the modal and normative information is part of our visual phenomenology then Dualism is false.

6) If the modal and normative information is part of our total phenomenology, but not our visual phenomenology, we have merely reinstated the problem we encountered in trying to make sense of Dualism.

C1: From 1-6, if we are to maintain Dualism, we ought to maintain that objects do not intimate to us the modal and normative information which is required for us to experience them through the medium of experience.

7) Given C1, if we are Dualists we are committed to one of the following:

i) At a sub-experiential level, a perceiving subject possesses the modal and normative information which is required for the subject to see spatially unified objects as such; the perceiving subject has such information, and that information is grounded by way of a relation to its immediate environment.

ii) At a sub-experiential level, a perceiving subject possesses the modal and normative information which is required for the subject to see spatially unified objects as such; the perceiving subject has such information, and that information is grounded by way of a relation to something which is extrinsic to its immediate environment.

iii) Perceiving subjects have a groundless command of the requisite modal and normative information (and it is externally related, or weakly internally related, to our sensory experience of objects – otherwise Monism would be true).

8) If 'i' or 'ii' is true, and merely causal objects cannot intimate norms to us, the information (even if it is in accord with external norms) is realised within us in a way which is purely dispositional.

9) If the information is dispositional, it is, considered independently of interpretation, anormative.

10) If 'i' or 'ii' are true, then if we are to experience spatially unified objects as such, we must appreciate the significance of the normative information.

11) If the information we have access to is anormative, it stands in need of interpretation if we are to appreciate its normative significance.

12) If we have to interpret the information which is present by way of 'i' or 'ii', we have reinstated a problem of the same form as we encountered in trying to make sense of Dualism.

So,

C2: We cannot make sense of locating the requisite modal and normative information in our total phenomenology but not our visual phenomenology, unless 'iii' is true.

So,

C3: The modal and normative information required to experience objects as objects must feature in our visual phenomenology (that is, it must feature in the perceptual content itself) unless 'iii' is true.

If 'iii' is true, then we still require an account of how the normative information we have (which cannot be embodied by mere dispositions) is applicable to the empirical world; that is of how the system of normative force can connect us to normative authorities. We thus find in perceptual experience an analogue of the problem we

found in descriptive language in the last chapter: how could normative systems take criteria of application from the empirical world if they are externally related, or weakly internally related, to those parts of the empirical world?

At the end of this chapter I will suggest, and in the next chapter I will show, that there is a seeming way to respond to such problems, which is in the lineage of transcendental idealism. This response works by denying that there are scheme-experience dualisms with regard to perceptual experience by allowing the empirical world to play a constitutive role in our conceptual scheme, a move which appears to collapse the scheme-world dualism at play. I will suggest and show that these responses are internally incoherent, because the manner in which empirical objects are taken to play such roles in fact presupposes a deeper scheme-world dualism. The alternative I will suggest (cf 2.5-6), and show (cf. 4-5), is that one must go further and deny scheme-world dualisms *tout court*, thereby denying particular scheme-world dualisms with respect to perceptual experience. This requires finding a way to take objects themselves to be partly constitutive of our conceptual schemes, without explaining their role by taking as determinate prerequisites of sense an anormative realm, or to the existence of essential some essential norms.

## **2.2 Modals, Norms, and Experience**

This section aims to establish that experience of spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects requires an appreciation of modal and normative relations. To simplify discussion, I will talk about a relatively simple object; a coin. The coin is a very thin cylinder, and in normal circumstances, all we are ever visually privy to at any one juncture is one aspect of the surface of the coin.

I am going to assume that,

**A1:** From each point of view upon the coin we do, at the very least, *seem* to experience one aspect of the surface of a spatially unified object.

One might wonder what work the word 'seem' is doing in A1. I use 'seem' to keep A1 neutral as between the different explanatory possibilities under consideration (Dualism

and Monism). Phenomenologically speaking, I take it that we do not feel that our experience is composed of raw data (that is, data which is itself bereft of the properties which associate it with other data), and that we infer that it is data about a such-and-such. For example, when experiencing an object, say a tomato, we do not feel that we are visually presented with an array of shape and colour properties, and then interpret this array to be properties of an object; we just take ourselves to be presented with a whole object – a tomato.

So, if we allow (for the sake of argument), that it is possible that we are only ever visually privy to some sort of raw data, and that this data is interpreted in such a way as to be an experience as of an object, this possibility must nevertheless fit with the reported phenomenology. For our purposes, the key consequence of this phenomenological commitment is that, even if perceptual phenomenology and total phenomenology come apart here, we must describe perceptual experience in a way which, from the first person perspective, allows for no distinguishing between the total phenomenology and the perceptual phenomenology; that is, on any account, there must be a unified state in which one feels oneself to be simply experiencing a spatially unified object.

What, then, is the information which allows us to take the presently experienced portion of the coin to be an aspect of a whole object? Here I will make another assumption which I will offer some argument for,

**A2:** Experiencing a spatially unified object as a spatially unified object requires experiencing the spatially unified object as the sort of thing which would present different aspects of itself to different points of view upon it.

So, in order to experience the coin as a whole object, certain associations must be made regarding the relation between presently experienced aspects of the coin and aspects of the coin absent from present experience.

**A2** is true because the notion of experiencing a spatially unified object as a spatially unified object is internally related to some awareness of material entailment and material exclusion relations between spatial aspects of an object (which are also

internal relations). The thought is this: objects are typically the sorts of thing which stay the same or vary independently of how we stay the same or vary (given, of course, that we do not causally affect the object in question); but our sensory experience of an object which is stationary and which we are moving around is one of variance rather than sensory sameness. So, to take each variant as a view of an aspect of the same whole object, we must have some capacity to unify the different experiences appropriately<sup>13</sup>. We must, somehow, take those different spatial aspects to be appropriately spatially related, viz. each different spatial aspect of the same object must be related to each of the other spatial aspects of that object in such a way that that spatial aspect, along with the others, *could* make up a unified whole. So, to experience a point of view upon an aspect of an object as a point of view upon an aspect of a *unified* object, one must experience that aspect as appropriately associated with other aspects, and possibly associated with further possible aspects, of the object in question.

The possible commensurability of a spatial part with other spatial parts is described by internal relations, inasmuch as facts like the following hold: as regards the objects we experience, we do not give sense to the possibility of two different lots of *space occupying stuff* co-occupying a zone of space unless one is a proper part of the other, or vice versa. That is, given that '*space occupying stuff*' is taken to be a very broad sortal, the occupation of a portion of space by one portion of *space occupying stuff*, excludes and entails facts about other portions of *space occupying stuff*. The exclusion and entailment works here in a way similar to the sense drawn out by Schaffer:

...I think that the philosopher who holds that non-identical concrete objects cannot co-locate has already upheld a real constraint on modal freedom. She has already declared that all concrete objects are relationally connected as occupants of a common space-time system, in a way that imposes global constraints.\* Just like someone who has the essential relational property of *being room-mates with someone else* requires the rest of the world to accommodate her needs, so an object that has the essential relation property of *not being placemates with anything else* requires the rest of the world to accommodate her needs.

\*[In a somewhat related vein, Bosanquet speaks of internal relations which involve 'a

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<sup>13</sup> There are appropriate and inappropriate ways to associate views. Given the same sensory data we may, for instance, associate views of aspects inappropriately by taking the experience to be of two qualitatively identical objects which are swapping places so very rapidly that we cannot tell that they are.

community of kind', giving the example: 'You cannot have a spatial relation between terms which are not in space' (1911, p. 277)] (2010; 353)

I qualify my assent to Schaffer's claim in the above quotation by saying 'similar' because I cannot see why one could not hold to a slightly less modally constraining claim whilst keeping the same idea of a system of internal relations; namely, the claim that non-identical objects of the same kind cannot co-locate. For such a view leaves open the possibility of the co-location of objects with different modal properties – such as statues and lumps of clay – whilst precluding the possibility of counting the same portion of stuff considered as *space occupying stuff* more than once.

The footnote to Schaffer's quotation (marked with an '\*') serves to sow the seed for an idea which will be very important later (cf. 2.21, 2.5-2.6, 4.24-4.25): that descriptions in terms of relations within a 'community of kind' are descriptions within a particular logical space – a space within which certain relations, which express what are essential to the kind in question, count as internal relations, and others, which express accidental qualities associated with such kinds, do not (cf. the discussion of how internal relations are implicated in the individuation of things like footballs in 1.2-1.3 ).

Experiencing *space occupying stuff* as *space occupying stuff* then, is internally related to the notion of a whole individual inasmuch as we can only understand unified *space occupying stuff* as being (or at least being composed of) some whole as a *spatially unified* thing or things; so, to make sense of the notion of a spatial aspect of a unified object each spatial aspect must relate to other aspects in such a way that it, along with the others, *could* be an aspect of a spatially unified whole.

Being a member of a set of possible points of view upon different aspects of a whole object experienced as a whole object, then, is also to be part of a possible network of possible points of views upon *space occupying stuff*. Part of what makes it a network of possible points of view upon *space occupying stuff* is the commensurability between information carried by any one perception and an array of other perceptions. We can then spell out commensurability in terms of material entailment and material exclusion. For example,

**Material Entailment:** In order for there to be a point of view upon a red thing to the left of a blue thing which is slightly obscuring a green thing, there must also be a point of view, available if I moved to the other side of the scene, upon a green thing slightly obscuring a blue thing which has a red thing to its right.

**Material Exclusion:** In order for there to be a point of view upon a red thing to the left of a blue thing which is slightly obscuring a green thing, there cannot be a point of view upon a red thing to the right of a blue thing which is slightly obscuring a green thing in the same place at the same time.

Spelling out these conditions upon the possibility of experiencing a set of sensory experiences in such a way as to have an experience of an spatially unified object as a *spatially unified object*, just is to spell out some of the content of such an experience.

Here it is important to stress that for a point of view upon an aspect of an object to be intelligible as a point of view upon a spatial part of an object it is only necessary that those aspects which are viewed *could* make up a whole, or the outer surface of a larger part of a whole. In making this claim room is left for a degree of indeterminacy. The importance of this indeterminacy is that it leaves open a gap between the way we experience things to be, and the way they actually are. This gap is central to possessing the sort of notion of mind-independence we spoke of in the last chapter: the way things actually are may always, within bounds, outstrip our expectations of it (cf. 1.4-1.43).

For an example of such indeterminacy, consider Siegel's case of a flowerpot which has a miniature city on its back (2006; 5). As we move around the flower-pot, we see the sorts of changes we would expect of a flower-pot until we reach the other side of it and meet with the unexpected structure. At this point we are surprised, but not by something unintelligible, for we can place this aspect of the plant-pot amongst its other possible and actual aspects.

## **2.21 Functional Properties, Spatial Properties, and Sortals**

In making reference to Siegel's example I moved from talking of objects individuated solely in terms of their spatial properties to objects individuated also in terms of their



functional properties – 'being a flowerpot' and 'being a city'. I want to dwell on this movement from spatial to functional properties for a section, and connect it to a point I initiated in the introduction, and alluded to in the last section: that systems of internal relations obtain within 'communities of a kind'. I want to dwell on these points and their connection in order to:

- a) make clear that similar examples of the type of indeterminacy made clear by Siegel's flower-pot example are available for objects individuated in terms of their spatial properties, and so: i) avoid the impression that I might have been equivocating in a way which obscures a salient difference; and ii) make clear that, because of the potential indeterminacy inherent in associating spatial aspects, a similar notion of mind-independence is implicit in the association of aspects under the sortal of *space occupying stuff*;
- b) show that considering the difference between individuation in terms of spatial properties and individuation in terms of functional properties throws light on the relations between logical spaces constituted by relations between things of a *community of a common kind*, of the sort which I highlighted in the quotation from Schaffer in 2.2.

Here is an example which is like Siegel's Flower-pot example, but where the surprise generated by the unfolding experience of the object is caused by what for a moment seems like an errant spatial property: I am circling what I take to be a sphere, I walk a full circle around it and the appearance appears uniform – this much I expect; I circle another few steps further, and, as I do, I am slowly presented with the side of a long tube with a semi-sphere at one of its ends. I am surprised, but not by *seeing* something incoherent. For the association of the aspects of the object I have seen is compatible with the following sorts of possibilities, which all allow that those aspects being associated with each other are internally related as aspects upon spatially unified objects: the tube has been rotating at the same rate as me and it has slowed, stopped, or my pace has quickened; the sphere itself has suddenly extended. Alternatively, all other things being equal, there must have been some other fundamental change in the situation.

A Siegel-style example which appeals only to associations between experiences of aspects which one ought to expect if one is experiencing something as a spatially

unified object is, then, more difficult to articulate, less clearly attributable to any one fact, and so less satisfying than Siegel's flower-pot example.

The example cast in terms of surprising spatial properties is awkward in the aforementioned ways because perceiving objects in accordance with the associations required to experience that stuff as *space occupying stuff* is basic inasmuch as it is a capacity which is a prerequisite of a capacity to experience things like functional properties. Siegel's example is clearer because the example concerns a kind of empirical object which is the kind it is because it is judged to be in accord with some criteria we have set – 'being a flower-pot'. This allows that we can switch criteria (from plant pot, to city) without creating an incoherence at the level of the associations involved in experiencing stuff as *space occupying stuff*.

For the flower-pot example, we can hold fixed that what we are experiencing at each juncture around the apparent flower-pot is still some unified space occupying object and dramatically vary its functional properties to surprising effect; we can, in this way, use the spatial properties to provide a backdrop to the variance in functional properties. From the perspective of the framework of internal relations which allows us to experience the object as *space occupying stuff* the properties 'flower-pot' and 'city' are accidental. Whereas, if we are only considering the associations concerned with spatial properties as a means of creating the sort of surprise-inducing change in the experience of the object found in the flower-pot example, we have no such common backdrop to hand, and so we must vary something which is basic in a similar way to spatial properties (like whether the object is stationary or not, whether the perceiver took a normal path through time; the causal powers of the object perceived; or whether or not the perceiver is perceiving aright).

Stressing the basicness of being able to individuate in terms of space occupation serves to illustrate a sense in which internal relations are a prerequisite of external relations in the way I suggested Wittgenstein endorsed, above (p.16). We may make certain empirically informed associations regarding what in particular we should expect when we individuate a particular kind of object which is individuated primarily through the identification of functional properties (I am not here committing to whether these associations are realised in our total phenomenology, or just our visual

phenomenology), but the associations in question are only intelligible if mappable onto a simultaneously more minimal and more general set of expectations about what we can (and sometimes must) expect from any object.

So, to experience spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects one must be in possession of structured but vague expectations regarding what sort of views, other than the present one, an object affords. The association which we must be able to make in order to experience objects as objects at all are a prerequisite of the more determinate associations which would be implicated in our experiential sensitivity to particular sorts of objects.

The more determinate and more contingent set of associations involved in individuating functional properties is, then, describable in part, in terms of further constraints being placed upon the modal freedom of possible/excluded aspects which has already been set by the internal relations governing the association of aspects upon some *space occupying stuff*. For instance, coming to have the ability to recognise tomatoes, and then subsequently recognising tomatoes as tomatoes, would be parasitic upon first recognising objects, and then experiencing, and so coming to expect, a very particular sort of change in those very objects.

Of course, I am not claiming that grasping a more determinate set of associations between spatial parts than is required to experience spatially unified objects is *all* that it would take to be able to individuate objects which are individuated in terms of their functional properties. One would, for instance, also have to grasp modal properties which describe the way we use such objects, or the role the properties we are identifying play in a wider system (such as a system in the natural world).

Also, claiming that the associations implicated in identifying *space occupying stuff* are already implicitly implicated within the identification of objects identified by way of their functional properties, is not to claim that such associations are ontogenetically prior. (We may, for instance, have to grasp some functional properties in order to grasp spatial properties – the capacities involved in experiencing these two different kind of properties may co-depend.) Nor is the claim being made that such associations are metaphysically prior. (It may be that the existence of spatial properties depends upon

the existence of functional properties – that there is a codependency between spatial and functional properties). I am making no claims at all in these foregoing respects.

The only claim I am making here is that the associations governing the individuation of *space occupying stuff* ground the norms for individuating *space occupying stuff* in terms of their functional properties. They do so inasmuch as the logical space of *space occupying stuff* – the internal relations indexed to the sortal *space occupying stuff* – is required in order to articulate the functional properties of *space occupying stuff*.

## **2.22 Material Entailment and Material Exclusion**

In order to experience an aspect of a spatially unified object as an aspect of a spatially unified object, we must see that aspect as bearing relations of exclusion and entailment to other aspects. Once we have this idea in view we can extract something more particular about content of such experiences; we can express this content using a subjunctive conditional, and make explicit that they have a modal element,

**M:** if one were to move to a place which afforded a different point of view upon the coin, then one would experience {an appropriate aspect}.

and, in unpacking '{an appropriate aspect}', we can make clear that there is normativity at play here,

**N:** if one has the capacity to experience a spatially unified object as a spatially unified object, one ought to associate particular sensory experiences, and not others, with what is presently experienced.

We can see the normativity in action here once we notice that if one is to experience a spatially unified object as a spatially unified object, there are aspects one *ought* to associate with each other and aspects one *ought not* to associate with each other.

## **2.3 Experiencing and Association**

Now that we are clear that the association of perceived aspects of the coin involve

modal and normative information, a clarification of the Dualist position with respect to the coin can be made once we ask: in virtue of what do we take what is presented in perception at each instance to be appropriately associated with what went before and what will follow?

Candidates would seem to be: 1) the way we are viz. dispositions, beliefs, conceptual capacities, physiology; 2) the way the coin and/or the wider environment is; 3) our past (causal, evolutionary, etc); or, 4) some combination of 1-3.

I want to whittle the above candidates away by distinguishing between two more particular questions:

Q1) How are the appropriate associations realised?

Q2) What could ground these associations?

Remembering A1 and A2 – that we do at least seem to experience whole objects without consciously performing an operation upon any visual data, and that modal and normative information is a prerequisite of such an experience – we can, by way of excluded middle, say something about Q1: either the modal and normative information which grounds the expectation is present in perceptual phenomenology itself, or it is not. Thus, we see that Dualism and Monism are two exclusive options which correspond to locating the requisite associations in the total phenomenology but not the perceptual phenomenology, and in the perceptual phenomenology (and so also the total phenomenology), respectively.

I now want to show that what can be an answer to Q1 is constrained by what can be an answer to Q2. I will do so by first playing through a simple Dualist account – an account upon which the operation which imbues the raw data with normativity must be internal to the agent. In subsequent sections I will discuss a more complicated account – one upon which the data is normatively imbued, by externalist means, prior to the agent's visual experience (yielding a sort of Monism) – and show this to relapse into an augmented form of Dualism.

### 2.31 Simple Dualism

One way of being a Dualist is to account for the appropriate association of aspects of the coin by appealing to a set of dispositions to associate such data. Indeed, such an appeal to dispositions (including dispositions to believe or to expect) seems unavoidable for the *simple* Dualist – a simple Dualist who is looking to ground the way in which the sensory experience of the object is interpreted by recourse to experiential contact with the object itself. Appealing to anything more than a disposition would entail some deliberation, which would serve as a way for the subject to separate the data from the operation upon it (contra A1); and anything less than a disposition would fail to separate the grounds for the operation from the data (contra Dualism). To put pressure on Dualism, then, let us suppose that an experience of the coin as a spatially unified object is realised in just the following way:

**D:** our capacity to see an aspect of the coin as an aspect of a *spatially unified object* just is our being disposed to take any sensory experience of an aspect of the coin to be a member of a set of possible sensory experiences of aspects of a *spatially unified object*, and to be appropriately associated with other members of that same set.

The problem with **D** is that even if the dispositional account can capture such modal commitments as expressed by **M**, such an account lacks the resources needed to explain the required normative information, **N**. For there is nothing inherent in the sequence of dispositions which is capable of being accountable to an external standard of correctness, and such accountability is crucial to the possibility of associating an appropriate aspect. To see why there is no place for the accountability of the set of dispositions to some standard, or standards, of correctness in such an account (viz., no way to account for the normative force of a normative authority), consider the question 'in virtue of what is any one sensory experience of an aspect in a series of experiences of aspects of the coin an experience as of an aspect of a *spatially unified object*?'.

For a proponent of **D**, the answer to the forgoing question would have to be that an experience of an aspect of a *spatially unified object* as an aspect of a *spatially unified object* is as such because the experiencer is disposed to associate a particular sensory

experience with other sensory experiences. However, we now ought to ask what the disposition to associate in this way could amount to.

If we are disposed to associate *x* with *y*, and this association is merely causal, then if *x* is in fact not associated with *y*, our dispositional set affords us no way of accommodating this fact, so we would be blind to potentially errant consequences, and unable to apply such a set of dispositions in situations in which objects did not accord with them. Thus, there is no capacity for normativity here; dispositions can only be concerned with what will happen, not with what should happen.

If the association amounts to more than a merely causal association – something like an expectation, or a belief – then we need to be able to make sense of the content of such an association. The content would surely have to be explicated by appeal to the norms which give reason to such associations; and such an appeal would presume a command of the normativity appropriate to the objects in question in a way which could not be grounded by the objects to which those norms are applicable (cf. 1.43-1.6). (If one accepts there could be no such grounding, this would entail the denial of simple Dualism – the idea that objects ground our interpretation of them).

So, although the proponent of **D** may have **M** accounted for,<sup>14</sup> if simple Dualism is to be maintained, we still have to make clear in what sense the whole set of dispositions can be accountable to the object which being disposed to associate experiences thusly is meant to put us in touch with. That is, we need to account for **N** by making those dispositions corrigible, in accordance with the object they are meant to allow us contact with.

In summary, then: for a set of dispositions to be used to interpret sensory information in order to yield an experience of a spatially unified object they would have to have the capacity to be corrigible (as we saw just above). For the proponent of **D**, however, there is nothing more to appeal to as a source of authority for this corrigibility than other sets of sensory information and dispositions to associate sensory information. What makes any given experience an experience of a *spatially unified object* just is its

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<sup>14</sup> In fact, I think she has not. **M** represents the form of the relations between appropriate aspects, so to account for **M** we would already need to have access to the sort of relata given by **N**.

place within an appropriate web of dispositional associations. So, unless we jump in and illicitly imbue one sensory experience of an aspect (or set of sensory experiences of aspects) of a spatially unified object (or objects) with the modal and normative information inherent in the experience of spatially unified objects as spatially unified objects, no experience of an object is better placed than any other to serve as a point of comparison. (And even if we did privilege an aspect in this way, this would only serve to calibrate a set of dispositions for a particular object).

Without some way of grounding the set of dispositions, then, the simple Dualist account is stuck: the required information – that one ought to expect a particular sort of counterfactual to obtain – is at best grounded by the propensity of the correct dispositions to associate a particular series of perceptual experiences. However, as the dispositions are taken to constitute our capacity to experience the spatially unified object as a spatially unified object, how they could be applicable – that is, how they put us in experiential touch with the object in such a way as to ground the requisite norms – goes unexplained.

So, if we are to be simple Dualists, we need to maintain something like **D**, but, if we maintain **D**, the normativity required to make sense of the associations of any one experience from a point of view with experiences from other points of view (which are necessary for the intuitive phenomenological claim that we do seem to see unified objects as unified objects to be true) is unavailable. Thus, there is on the simple Dualist picture a discontinuity in the relation between normative force and normative authority, so to maintain Dualism we must guarantee the normativity of the dispositions elsewhere.

### **2.32 Dualism or Monism: a Vicious Regress or a Privileging of Normative Authority**

I want now to pause to make explicit that the problem afflicting **D** is one horn of the dilemma which constitutes what I am calling a visual rule-following problem: if the grounds for interpreting a particular sensory experience to be appropriately associated with others is given by information gleaned from some other experience which is thought to put us in contact with some normative authority by way of some further set



of dispositions, then the problem at hand is merely pushed back to that point of contact with a normative authority.

The other horn of the dilemma is sharpened when we try to solve the problems of **D** by setting a point of comparison in order to stop the regress by grounding the medium of the appropriate normative information with a normative authority which does not stand in need of interpretation.

The first way in which we might attempt to blunt the second horn of the dilemma is by claiming that a brute relation to the way that things are in the world calibrates our dispositions, the thought being that, through our experience of them, worldly objects themselves serve as the grounds of the requisite dispositional associations. It is apparent that this idea, as it stands, is a non-starter. It is a variant of the *Myth of the Given*; to buy into this idea would be to assume that we can make sense of “an availability [of something] for cognition to subjects whose getting what is supposedly Given to them does not draw on capacities required for the sort of cognition in question” (McDowell 2008; 1). The sort of capacities in question – those affording the appropriate association of aspects – are needed in order that we be in perceptual contact with objects at all. So how we could be in the position of bearing an appropriate perceptual relation to the object – a relation which would enable the object to ground the appropriate associations – is mysterious; that is, it is mysterious how merely being in the presence of object-hood could ground the association of aspects in such a way as to allow then to be taken to be appropriately unified.

We are now either forced back onto the first horn of the dilemma, or forced to find a way of guaranteeing the grounds of the associations expressed by **M** and **N** in a way which makes no appeal to the subject's phenomenology. In terms of the rule-following dilemma presented above, we must find a way of getting a content which does not stand in need of interpretation, but which is not an instance of the Myth of the Given.

Candidates for providing this guarantee fall into two camps: one which looks to facts about the perceiving subject and its environment; and another which looks to factors extrinsic to any one particular relation between subject and environment viz. an externalist guarantee of the normative content. Examples of the first camp are Quine's

similarity space (1977) or Campbell's binding parameters (2002) (assuming that those sort of hypotheses about our visual systems are taken to be explanatory of our visual contact with basic features of the world rather than merely descriptive). Teleo-semantic style projects, or indeed any project which attempts to explain the content of intentional phenomena by way of a selectional story, fit the bill for the second camp.<sup>15</sup>

Members of the first camp, if presented as explanations of how our associations are grounded, rather than mere descriptions of the basic associations we do make, are either doomed, or collapse into the second sort anyway. They are doomed if they are taken to explain the capacities grounding **M** and **N** because invoking them either: a) begs the question inasmuch as we would still be owed an explanation of how the required resources were available at this lower level of association; or b) undermines the explanatory strategy inasmuch as it seems pertinent to ask why, if we are to assume the required resources at this lower level, should we not save a step and do so a level up? Thus, even if we do have reason to invoke a lower level of perceptual explanation, we are still owed an explanation of the capacities operative at this level, and here we are pushed to consider extrinsic factors.

### **2.33 Selectional Stories**

The second sort of explanatory strategy I just mentioned establishes an apparent Monism as follows. First, we appeal to natural function as a source of normative authority which is not dependent on the normativity inherent in our experiential lives. Then, we tell a selectional story about how our dispositions were moulded into accord with the external world. Then, maybe, we can allow that these dispositions allow us access to a more immediate normative authority: objects themselves, or at least mostly veridical representations of such objects.

What I now want to show is, if such a selectional story is being proposed as an explanation of our normative sensitivity to the modal properties of objects, the project fails. The mode of the project's failure is a relapse into a problematic Dualism analogous to that which the adherent of **D** is committed. I take this to be constitutive of

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<sup>15</sup> For instance, Millikan (1984, 1990), Papineau (1993); of course, not all selectional stories need run like these do, or posit an explanation of content in the same sense, and inasmuch they are not addressed by my arguments.

an oscillation: from the regress of grounds for interpretation, viz. the above problems with **D**, to the self-intimating Monist solution, viz. the *Myth of the Given*, back to the regress of interpretation viz. reapplying **D**'s method at a level prior to any perceptual phenomenology, then back to a self-intimating solution, viz. the subjects' having magical grasp of the normative content of their perceptions despite being radically out of touch with the appropriate normative authorities (this last clause is the problem with selectional stories which I will now endeavour to articulate)...and so on.

The failure of the selectional account to provide the requisite normative content ensues from the proponent of the selectional story either making an illicit passage from talk of one sort of normative requirement (an externalist one (cf. **ENR**, below)) to talk of another (an internalist one (cf. **INR**, below)); or, failing to recognise that they are talking about the wrong sort of requirement (viz. the externalist one).

The result of either of these failures is that the proponent of the selectionalist account locates herself within a virtuously circular explanation which she is not entitled to situate herself within. This is because she has helped herself to the idea that we have the capacity to make judgements about already normative information we are presented with, without allowing that we have the capacity for contact with the normative authorities which would make sense of such a capacity to grasp the information *as* normative information. Such accounts thus create a disconnection within an otherwise potentially virtuous circle.

To unpack the claims I have just made let us now look to the two sorts of normative requirement I have in mind:

**External Normativity Requirement (ENR):** there is a fact of the matter about which experiences of aspects of an object one ought and ought not to associate with each other when experiencing a spatially unified object as such. Further, this fact is realised in the subject in a way which leads her to act in accordance with those facts. However, that she does act so because of those facts is not immanently present to her.

**Internal Normativity Requirement (INR):** there is a fact of the matter about

which experiences of aspects of an object one ought and ought not to associate with each other when experiencing a spatially unified object as such. Further, this fact is realised in the subject's experience in a way which is immanently present to her.

A selectional story, as briefly schematised above, attempts to ensure the normative status of our dispositions by ensuring that they are appropriately related to some normative facts by an externalist route. Millikan, for instance, does so by first distinguishing between distal rules and proximal rules (1990). Distal rules pertain to the proper function of an organism within a selectional system. Proximal rules, on the other hand, say only what facts about a creature should follow a given state of the biological system that constitutes that creature.

The way in which proximal rules are shaped by distal rules is probabilistic: if the proximal rules of a creature accord with distal rules (or if the creature has a propensity to form proximal rules which have a propensity to accord with distal rules), then those proximal rules (or the propensity to form such rules) are more likely to survive. In this way, appealing to the norm of proper function looks to explain away the mystery of how there is appropriate contact with a normative authority by showing that mystery to be illusory: the norm of proper function amounts to a notion of fitness for purpose, and “the environment itself creates the illusion of fitness, by getting rid of the unfit” (Steiner 2009; 24).<sup>16</sup>

A Millikan-style selectional story would, then, map onto our coin case in the following way: the set of dispositions appealed to in **D** would be proximal rules; they specify what will happen to a subject internally given a particular sensory input; and the manner in which these rules can be correct or incorrect just is the manner in which they relate to a corresponding distal rule. The distal rule will pertain to the benefit of having a phenomenology which represents objects as objects; for instance, a distal rule might be something like “if you move around an object, expect it to look appropriately different”. The promise of the account is to import the required normativity into the

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<sup>16</sup> I quote Steiner here because I think he makes use of the same notion of natural selection explaining away the applicability of norms. He does so in a better manner (inasmuch as it sets out to assume nothing anormative and so sets out in a way which does not look to disentitle itself to a place in a virtuous circle), though still flawed (he still disentitles himself – just in a different way - by assuming that there are determinate prerequisites to sense). I will turn to this use later (cf. 2.52).

content of **D**'s dispositions, and to do so without talking about the normativity of a creature's representations (for, it is claimed, all that is appealed to are facts about the environment), thus avoiding the *Myth of the Given*.

To appreciate the power of this account – if correct – to explain away difficulties, consider how describing the content of perceptual experience in terms of the distal and the proximal seems to dissolve a particular problem which can serve to make rule-following seem mysterious; namely, given that the relation between any series is describable by an infinite variety of rules, what fact about the past instances of the application of a concept could determine what should count as a correct future application?

The proposed solution is this: taken in isolation from distal rules, proximal rules merely express dispositions; as such, proximal rules are not normative, and thus not a candidate for deviant interpretation. The normative content of proximal rules only becomes apparent when considered in the light of distal rules; and, crucially, as the normativity of distal rules falls out of the notion of proper biological function (a bald fact of the matter), and as any explanation of the norm of proper biological function is, in the sense expressed in the quotation from Steiner, above, retrospective, the notion of a deviant interpretation does not apply here either, and the problem dissolves.<sup>17</sup>

The selectional solution to the problem at hand is, however, premature: the above problem only arises once an account of the possibility of the normative content of our perceptual phenomenology has been established; yet, I want to argue, it is on just this count that the selectional story fails.

The arguments given earlier in this chapter showed that a prerequisite of experiencing an aspect of a spatially unified object as an aspect of a spatially unified object is a sensitivity to material entailment and material exclusion relations between points of view. A further point was that the expectations regarding the relations between perceived aspects and unperceived aspects of the present object must be indeterminate; the relations must be so in order to allow that the actuality of the object can outstrip a

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<sup>17</sup> Whether or not this sort of normativity is unproblematic in this way is by no means settled; for instance, it relies upon assumptions about the notion of theoretical simplicity, and a realism about norms. I am passing over these issues here as I think the account fails at a more basic level.

subject's expectations regarding it. Awareness of this sort of outstripping, as we saw, is internally related to a notion of a thing's independence of us (cf 2.2-2.22), and thus of our notion of there being an independent grounds for the unity of the different aspects which we experience and associate when experiencing an object.

In the above respects, it is not enough that the agent be subject to the normative force of the environment so as merely to accord with the norms exerted by the environment; the subject must have access to normative information regarding any one *particular* perception inasmuch as they must be able to recognise objects as grounds for which experiences we ought to associate and which we ought not. For, if we could not take the actuality of an object to outstrip our apprehension of it, we would have no grounds upon which to consider it as mind-independent; and, without such grounds, the inclusion of a sense of object-hood in our phenomenology (perceptual or total) would look mysterious.

For, as we saw when considering **D**, if we are disposed to expect x to follow y and x does not in fact follow y, our dispositional set affords us no way of accommodating this fact, so we would be blind to this consequence. Furthermore, if a description of what an experience of objects amounts to, by our lights, can be given exhaustively by distal rules, it is constituted only by dispositions. So, if this is the case, unless we can make appropriate sense of those dispositions through reflection (which is to introduce a form of **Dualism** about how we can relate to something which is already normative (see below), we are not automatically in a position from which to make appropriate judgements about the requisite accountability which underpins our associations of experiences of aspects to other experiences of aspects.

Thus, by examining the prerequisites of our capacity to realise that the object is not as it seemed when it was initially perceived, it becomes clear that an account which meets ENR is not strong enough to account for our phenomenology. INR must be met by an account of the phenomenology of experiencing objects, and a Millikan-style selectional account can only meet ENR.

At this point the selectional story teller may make the following move: the requisite normativity of experience only arises because of an agent's reflection upon experience.

Thus, by way of reflection, the normative role of the proximal rules is realised internally to the subject. To make this move – aside from making trouble for A1, for in most novel cases we do not have to exercise reflection at all – is to invoke either an occult faculty which reinstates a Dualism, or a transcendental idealist picture upon which our judgements, or faculties which make judgement possible, make a contribution to what there is to make judgements about.

Thus my diagnosis of the failure of a Millikan-style selectional account is that it creates a problematic isomorphism between the norms of proper function which mould a creature's dispositions and a creature's relations to the norms inherent in those dispositions, which is an analogue of the problematic relations between the objects of perception and the dispositions which the Dualist wanted to claim provided an explanation of access to the objects of perception.

The problem, then, both for the basic Dualist account, and for Monism about our phenomenology supplemented with a selectional account, is that each of these depends, in different ways, upon the prior acceptance of there being an external relation between normative authority and normative force. For this reason, in order for the normative side of the isomorphism to relate to the worldly side, it needs to be already appropriately normative, but making sense of that normativity is dependent on the prior existence of just such a relation. The issue, then, again becomes a question of explaining such a relation without causing the same problems (and with this, we have reached C2 of our earlier argument summary (cf.2.11)); as such we have set the scene for a return to the idea of *transcendental idealism*.

## **2.4 Summary**

I have shown that given minimal assumptions about the phenomenology of object experience, we can see that the total phenomenology must include modal and normative information. If we then try to account for the presence of that information in the style of the Dualist, we face a visual version of the rule following paradox. Being a Dualist instantiates the sort of isomorphism between normative force and normative authority which we considered to be problematic in the last chapter. It does so by attempting to explain our apparent visual phenomenology in terms of normative

authorities and norms which are externally related, or weakly internally related.

In a wider frame, then, the point of this chapter, so far, has been to show that we should accept that perceptual experience of objects requires the same sort of normative system of synchronic and diachronic relations as descriptive language was described as depending upon in Chapter 1; and, that once we recognise as much, we face, in respect to perception, the same sort of problems regarding the disconnection of normative force and normative authority as we did when describing descriptive language.

## **2.5 Internal Relations and Arbitrariness; Mathematical Rules and Grammar.**

We ended the last chapter with the thought that such content as perceptual experience of objects provides is a prerequisite for descriptive language use. One way of thinking of the sort of prerequisite perception provides, then, is as a prerequisite of the *justification* of descriptive language: perception provides the access to objects which is needed if objects are to make true or false our use of descriptive language. One might also think that the sorts of norms I have been claiming are implicit in perception are themselves accountable to the task of providing veridical representations of the anormative world. Accepting this, however, casts our perceptions of the world as externally related to the world in a way which has proved, thus far, problematic.

Maintaining a position that neither allows for our perceptual experience to be constituted by an external relation between scheme and content, nor collapses that dualism by allowing scheme-independent content to provide the scheme, requires finding a way to think of the objects of our basic perceptual experience as having no criterion for correctness which is externally related to our systems of norms; that is, to replace the external relation between scheme-independent content and scheme with a set of internal relations which are not themselves accountable to anything else (viz., a set of internal relations that do not stand in need of justification). We need, then, to find a way of thinking of the world we refer to as featuring directly within our systems of norms, and of our systems of norms partly constituting the world we refer to; we need to think of our most basic apprehensions of the world as apprehensions of role-players whose roles are articulated only by recourse to the logical spaces which their role playing constitutes (this is the sense which I hoped to draw from the quotation from



McGinn, earlier (cf. p52)).

To describe the requisite sense of an unaccountable system of internal relations which encompasses parts of the world will take the rest of this and the next two chapters. What I aim to show in those chapters is that Wittgenstein makes available a general strategy for allowing us to think of our normative systems (grammar) as encompassing parts of the empirical world.

By now looking to the sort of picture Steiner paints of Wittgenstein's view of grammar, and an erroneous contrast Steiner draws between canonical and novel rules, we can gain a neat overview of what Wittgenstein's view affords us; of how on such a view as Wittgenstein's, the empirical world can itself feature in the most basic levels of our practices in a non-mysterious way.

Here is Steiner's account of a distinction Steiner thinks he finds in Wittgenstein:

But what is much more important here than counting the occurrences of 'rules of grammar' is that in RFM Wittgenstein has broadened his conception of what a 'rule of grammar' is supposed to be. In PG, for example Wittgenstein had written:

Grammar is not accountable to any reality. It is grammatical rules that determine meaning (constitute it) and so they themselves are not answerable to any meaning and to that extent are arbitrary. (X, p. 184)

By the time 1939 rolls around, Wittgenstein has very different things to say:

I have no right to want you to say that mathematical propositions are rules of grammar. I only have the right to say to you, 'Investigate whether mathematical propositions are not rules of expression, paradigms—propositions dependent on experience but made independent of it.' (LFM, V, p. 55)

Even if this (rather ambiguous) passage says that mathematical propositions actually are rules of grammar, it also characterizes rules of grammar in ways inconceivable to the Wittgenstein of PG. Mathematical theorems, far from being arbitrary, are 'dependent on experience'. Using the current jargon, we can say that mathematical theorems are rules which are 'supervenient' on experience. So although mathematical propositions are 'independent of experience', this does not mean that we could decide to make  $7 + 5 = 127$  into a mathematical proposition. Whether mathematical 'rules of expression', as Wittgenstein now calls them, are to be called also 'rules of grammar', is a matter of little concern. (Steiner 2009; p10)

Although in the above quotation, Steiner seems to be open to the possibility of Wittgenstein thinking that mathematical rules are a part of Grammar, he is open to this

thought only inasmuch as we might broaden the category of Grammar to include both rules that are internally and externally related to the empirical world. Steiner, for instance, elsewhere in the same paper, says that mathematical rules

...differ from grammatical rules in that the former have an 'internal' relationship with their applications. (*op. cit.*; 2)

Steiner's point in the first of the above passages is, then, that because Wittgenstein thinks that grammar (that is, grammar excluding the part of grammar which pertains to mathematics, or grammar as a category exclusive of mathematical rules) cannot be accountable to reality, Wittgenstein thinks that it must be externally related to reality, and grammar is in this sense arbitrary. On the other hand, Steiner intends to demonstrate that Wittgenstein's view of mathematical rules is that they are grounded in the empirical world, and so are internally related to the empirical world, and therefore, cannot be arbitrary.

### **2.51 Steiner's Illustrative Mistake**

Steiner's point, I think, must be partly wrong. He is running together grammar's being unaccountable to the way the world is and a particular way of thinking of grammar as being arbitrary; he thinks a rule cannot be arbitrary if that rule is grounded in experience. For Steiner, the arbitrariness of grammar consists in its being an autonomous logical space which is externally related to the empirical world; grammar is unaccountable to the way the empirical world is only inasmuch as grammar's autonomy allows that its propositions do not stand in need of grounding by the empirical world it is externally related to.

In thinking of grammar so, Steiner misinterprets Wittgenstein's use of the word 'arbitrary'; he takes the relation between grammar and the world to be arbitrary inasmuch as it is an external (modally free) relation – grammar could vary and the world stay the same, or vice versa. A different, and I think more consistent, way of reading 'arbitrary' is as follows: what we accept or do not accept into grammar is not dictated, or justified, by the world (and so it is *in this sense* independent of the empirical world); but grammar is made possible by, and in part constituted by, the

empirical world, and in virtue of this is internally related to the empirical world (and so grammar is in this sense *dependent* upon our experience of the empirical world). These two relations – one of dictating a possibility (and so being a relation which would be appealed to in a justification of why some x is the case; for instance, if y dictates x, and y is the case, then x is the case), and one of enabling a possibility – are, then, both ways of thinking of grounding as an internal relation, and they ought not to be confused: grounding-qua-justification and grounding-qua-enabling.

If we use grounding in the sense of enabling, we can allow that the world shows up for us in an already normative way (as it does when it is experienced as being populated by spatially unified objects) and so presents us with an open ended choice of parts of the empirical world we might take up as criterial (as new parts of grammar). On such a picture, we assimilate parts of the world (which are already normatively structured in virtue of occupying a place within an already established normative context) into our grammar by treating those parts as normative authorities within a new logical space.

For instance, any stick can be chosen to be the normative authority for attributions of '1 metre' (what the standard metre is, is in this sense arbitrary); to be able to choose a stick one must already have a command of the salient normative nodes within the logical space one is selecting from – here the empirical category 'sticks' (in this sense the grammar surrounding the concept 'metre' is internally related to the world); and, once that particular stick is chosen, it does not make sense to judge it against the standard it sets (it is in this sense unaccountable). So grammar can be internally related to the empirical world – a choice of a different stick would have produced a similar but different grammar – and is nevertheless unaccountable to the empirical world – the empirical world in no sense made the selection of a particular stick correct. (We will see much more of this example in chapter 4).

So, in opposition to Steiner, I want to illustrate a manner in which a grammar includes parts of the world so is *in this sense* dependent upon our experience of the empirical world. Furthermore, I want to show that it is because of this manner of inclusion that grammar is unaccountable to an independent way the world is – that when already intelligible empirical objects are given a criterial role, they are unaccountable to the standards they set. *In this sense* grammar is independent of the empirical world. This,

then, is all consistent with retaining the thought that grammar is autonomous and arbitrary: grammar does not bear a justificatory relation to any independent way in which the world is, and the rules of grammar did not have to be as they are (which is not to say the same facet of the world could be criterial to a different Grammar, it is just to say that different criteria could have been selected (this is the sense in which the standard metre stick in paris might have been longer (cf. 4.2-4.25, and the example below)).

To cast 'grammar' in this way I will, in chapters 3 and 4, show that there is a clear way of saying how grammar is not accountable to the empirical world but is still grounded in it. I will do so by showing that empirical objects can take up a criterial role within language and can hence be a part of grammar grounded in the empirical world (cf. 4.2-4.25). This will show that in using objects as criteria, those parts of grammar which are constituted by objects are unaccountable to the standards which they serve as criteria for (cf. 4); further, showing that what is arbitrary is which part of a given logical space is selected to serve as criteria.

Explicating the view I have just been outlining (which will take up the rest of this thesis) will make clear that the inference from grammar being unaccountable to the way the world is to grammar bearing an external relation to the world, and in that sense being arbitrary, is invalid.

This explication complete, allowing objects to feature as a part of both our perceptual norms and as part of our linguistic norms, will be unproblematic; furthermore, recognising as much will amount to seeing how normative force and normative authority are, in particular situations, internally related in a way which precludes the *explanation* of their relation in terms of the accountability of such a relation to some external criteria.

I am, then, here, writing promissory notes, to be fulfilled in the next two chapters, for filling out the sense in which the normative relations between parts of a logical space do not stand in need of grounding-*qua*-justification by being related to a normative authority, or prior set of rules, which is outside of that logical space; but, still allowing that a logical space may still be grounded by - *qua* inaugurated in virtue of the

relations already made available by – a different logical space (and this relation of grounding can be an internal relation, as the relation between the logical space of perceived spatial properties and perceived functional properties is (cf. 2.2-2.21)).

## **2.52 The internal Relation of Mathematical Rules to the World**

What I will now do with the rest of this chapter is to illustrate what is partly, and usefully, right about Steiner's account of Wittgenstein's thought: Steiner's description of the mode of the internal relation of mathematical rules to the world. Once again I want to emphasise that I am not doing so as part of an exegetical case study, but rather to elucidate an approach to making sense of criterion-less norms which specifically relate to my own concerns.

I will then work through what I take to be a mistaken concern Steiner has regarding the application of Wittgenstein's thought. Analysis of this mistake provides an example of how to demystify what seems to be, even given the internal relation between normative force and normative authority I argue for, still a mystery: the application of rules in novel situations (*qua* situations which they have no internal relation to).

The relation between the empirical world and mathematical rules is, for Steiner, internal inasmuch as there could be no change in the circumstances of application without a change in the content of the proposition, because physical circumstances *constrain* the possibility of what one can mean mathematically. The mode of the constraint is this:

Rather than explaining cases of the application of mathematics, Wittgenstein rather explains them away – the applicability of mathematics is an illusion caused by our calling 'mathematics' those very rules founded on what we call their application, just as natural selection attempts to explain away the fitness of species to their environment; the environment itself gets rid of the illusion of fitness, by getting rid of the unfit (Steiner 2009; 23)

The move which Steiner has Wittgenstein making, which allows us to think of mathematical rules and the empirical world as internally related, then, is to unpack the

idea of mathematical necessity into the idea of a hardened empirical regularity, where a “hardened empirical regularity” is a contingent generalisation endowed the status of a logical rule by the way in which it is used.

Taking mathematical rules to have developed in this way helps us avoid the following way of thinking of a rule as having some mystical quality which adds normativity to the empirical. It seems as though rules for the application of mathematical concepts have contingent empirical content, so it looks as though if the world had been different, so too would be the rules for application. If this were the case, however, one might think we should worry about the *necessary* status of truths like  $2+2=4$ ; for, if these could have been different we lose the right to think of them as objective standards; standards which are independent of our contingent way of life.

If we could not avoid the above way of thinking, given the perceived lack in the empirical world of grounds for the necessity of mathematical rules, we might think we ought to look instead to the metaphysical to explain the connection between the realm of objective exceptionless rules and the contingent content to which these rules apply. The mystery then is this: how do we make sense of the objectivity of the rules and the generality of their application, without positing something over and above the natural world, and thus inaccessible to empirical creatures like us? This is an aspect of the mystery of the *synthetic a priori* – 'how could norms be empirically founded? and if they could not be, how could empirical normative authorities exert normative force?' – which in one particular form and another has occupied this thesis so far and will continue to do so.

### **2.53 A Misplaced Concern**

Steiner, given the above description of the applicability of mathematical rules, is concerned that Wittgenstein's account is inadequate because Wittgenstein's description does not apply to novel uses of mathematical rules. Steiner's concern, however, is misplaced. The concern rests upon the assumption that novel rule uses must be *justified* by their applications in the same way as canonical rules are. However, that this is a confusion can be seen once we resurrect the two senses of *grounding* which I illustrated earlier: grounding-*qua*-justification, and grounding-*qua*-enabling.

The description of canonical rule application does not apply to novel mathematical rule use because novel mathematical rule use does not stand in need of justification by its grounds. The grounds in question here are only grounds-*qua*-enablings not grounds-*qua*-justifications. Rules only have grounds-*qua*-justifications once they are canonical because grounds-*qua*-justifications are just the existent useful applications of rules within the logical spaces that are inaugurated by those novel rules, compelling one to use those rules more.

In the wider frame of this thesis, the problem Steiner has with the novel application of mathematical rules is of a similar form to the problems I have been explicating regarding the application of norms to novel language use and novel sensory experiences. So, once again, the hope is that identifying the confusion regarding Steiner's idea of grounding will set the scene for a resolution of the wider problems I have been discussing, and for making us comfortable with the idea of the bedrock of our normative lives being normatively structured and criterion-less. This resolution, properly contextualised, will rid us of the anxiety driving the desire to give an account of the *synthetic a priori*. Again, in making the foregoing point I am stressing that I am not discussing Steiner with a view to showing that he gets Wittgenstein wrong for the sake of such exegetical discussion; rather, I am using Steiner's mistake for the following two purposes:

- to demonstrate a way in which holding onto parts of a transcendental idealist picture serves to commit one to an incoherent picture of our normative relation to the world.
- to illustrate an aspect of Wittgenstein's thought – his concept of grammar – which is useful to the overall project of this thesis: finding a way to allay the urge either to identify the roots of normativity, or to appeal to metaphysical pictures in order to explain why we cannot identify such roots.

The mystery of the *synthetic a priori*, whether it is a mystery, and indeed the matter of whether there even is a *synthetic a priori* for there to be a mystery about, will be the subject of the next chapter. What I will do now is to show that the problem Steiner claims to have identified with Wittgenstein's method – namely, that although this

method dissolves the problem of the *synthetic a priori* for canonical mathematical rules it does not do so for novel mathematical rules – is in conflict with his own reading of Wittgenstein. It is important to note, however, that whether or not Steiner reads Wittgenstein correctly is besides the point. My suggestion is that a consideration of the dialectic here will give the wherewithal to see aright certain aspects of the problem of the *synthetic a priori* that specifically relate to my own concerns.

Steiner rightly claims,

Wittgenstein's point is...that empirical regularities are pre-conditions for the entire institution of rule following, including most aspects of human language. The philosopher must simply take these regularities as given, and not try to explain them...

It is a *brute fact*—to explain which is not the business of philosophy (though perhaps of other disciplines)—that in many cases, training produces, and is intended to produce, a uniformity of behaviour. (Steiner 2009; 6, my italics)

The conflict I wish to point to is as follows. For Wittgenstein's account to have the deficit Steiner attributes to it, Wittgenstein would have to be committed to novel rules requiring a determinate sense *before* they are put to use. For this to be true there would have to be determinate prerequisites of sense – criteria which determine the correctness for a rule and do so prior to, and so independently of, the rule's use. The putative separation between the canonical and the novel in terms of the canonical being explicable and the novel being mysteriously inexplicable thus rests upon a desire for explanation at the level at which Steiner thinks philosophers ought not to ask for explanations; an explanation of the criteria of correctness for a rule prior to that rule occupying a role within a practice of holding things accountable to other things.

The point just made is a point I will make over and over in the remainder of this thesis: commitment to such an explanation – an explanation of the determinate prerequisites of sense – goes hand in hand with themes which will be crucial to the next two chapters. These themes are: thinking of arbitrariness in the wrong sort of way; thinking of internal relations as always justificatory; and, crucially (for the problems of this and the last chapter), making novel applications of norms seem mysterious through



requiring that such norms have a criterion of correctness in order to be efficacious.

So, I will now expand upon the idea that Steiner requires there to be criteria for novel rule application when he ought not, and offer a short diagnosis of why, for him, it seems necessary to do so; then in the next two chapters I will take a step back and establish the point in a more thorough and general way.

### **2.54 Mathematical Novelty**

Steiner, then, thinks that, with the appeal to the natural selection of rules in hand, Wittgenstein is well set to explain away worries concerning canonical concept application, but stuck when it comes to novel application. Steiner illustrates his thought by giving an example of a mathematical theorem having application in an area disparate from its origin (2009; 24). The example is intended to illustrate this point: if mathematical propositions are *grounded* in their empirical application – inasmuch as what allows a meaningful mathematical application just “is the underlying regularity upon which the theorem is supervenient” (*ibid*; 22) – then we seem to have no account of the grounding of cases in which a theorem applies in areas the contingent circumstances of which do not form part of the theorem's grounds.

As I take Grammar to be internally related to the world in a like manner to mathematical rules, the above problem with the application of novel mathematical rules would also apply to any novel uses of grammar. For the reasons I outlined at the end of the last section, however, I do not think that this is a problem. We can make this clear by first noting that, just as with the norms governing instances of descriptive language use and those governing the perception of particular aspects of individual spatially unified objects as such, at some point in each mathematical proposition's life it has been novel. Thus, unless we can make sense of our capacity for novelty, we cannot make sense of the canonical inasmuch as we cannot make sense of how we have any empirical propositions which are candidates for either hardening or falling by the wayside.

We thus return to the idea that we need to be able to make sense of the thought that new rules can be applied to the empirical world in order to make sense of how any rule

can be applied to the world at all (a theme which we encountered at 1.43 and has been constitutive of much of this chapter). We do so now, though, in a different light. For up until now I have been presenting the problem with novel rule application as *epitomising* a particular mystery concerning the connection of normative force and normative authority: that in cases of novel rule application we can see especially clearly that, if we think of rules and their criteria as externally related, there can be no unproblematic connection between the rule and its criteria for application.<sup>18</sup> I am now examining novel applications of rules thought of as internally related to their criteria for application in order to show why this is unproblematic.

We must be clear, then, that novel concept application is significant in the current context but not because it exposes a lack of an ontogenetic account of a sort which would contrast with Steiner's avowal of the fact that no such account is possible within philosophy (in the quotation given above). On the contrary, considering the *problematization* of novel rule application is a way of pointing to a tacit and illicit *desire* for an ontogenetic explanation. It affords us this way of pointing because (as I briefly summarised at the end of the last section), if we can only think of the application of rules as intelligible to us if there is already a criterion for their correct application, novel rule application is a phenomenon for which we desire a criterion of correctness, but for which there cannot yet be one. Thus, if we assume that both sorts of rule (novel and canonical) can have content only inasmuch as they can be accountable to some empirical grounds, we generate a mysterious difference between the two sorts of rule; and in generating the mystery, we obscure the actual difference between novel and canonical rules.

Why though would the idea that novel rules and canonical rules are accountable to some criteria in *the same* way seem *obvious* to someone who, *prima facie*, rejects the

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<sup>18</sup> To refresh, novel rule application *epitomises* an irresolvable problem for any account of an external relation between concepts and their applications in this way: even if we had a contingently correct bridging principle for all of the hitherto canonical cases of rule application, this would not, in principle, work for novel cases. For such a principle to work it would have not only to be contingently applicable to all of the previous cases of rule use, but also to be applicable to any possible future case. For such a guarantee we would have to invoke more rules to guarantee the application (initiating a regress) or invoke instances of the *myth of the Given* in allowing that new cases make obvious to us which rules to use. If we then admit that, to some degree, *all* descriptive language use, or perception of things as things, relies upon norms obtaining in diachronic relations to novel situations, we see that this is a problem for any account of an external relation between concepts and their applications (cf. 1.43).

idea that there could be an explanation of the prerequisites of sense? What makes it seem obvious is, I think, that internal relations between the empirical grounds of mathematical rules and the use of the mathematical rules are taken to be justificatory, and they are taken to be so because the internal relation is one of constraint: the empirical world *constrains* what we do by affording certain possibilities and disallowing others. It is in this sense that it seems problematic that mathematical rules should have novel application – the constraint provided by the empirical grounds of a rule ought not to justify one in giving sense to our attribution of what is, in a situation which does not share the same grounds, allowed and disallowed to count as being in accord with the mathematical rule. This idea of constraint allows us to make sense of one part of a logical space being accountable to another part of that same space without the introduction of some intermediary object or hypothetical relation. Thus Steiner's worry is this: canonical applications of mathematical rules, in virtue of their being constrained by the empirical grounds *they* make intelligible, are grounded-*qua*-justified by their own application to the world; whilst the sense of novel mathematical rules must be justified in virtue of some other hitherto mysterious grounds-*qua*-justifications because such uses cannot be constrained by the empirical grounds from whence they currently draw grounding-*qua*-justification.

Here I think we need to pause and consider two different notions of a rule's relating to the empirical world and ask whether it is appropriate to talk of grounding in the same way in each instance:

- A rule is grounded by empirical situations made intelligible according to the use of that same rule. (For instance, the norms concerning the association of aspects of *space occupying stuff* are grounded by objects made intelligible to us by successful associations according to that rule within the same logical space).
- A rule is stipulated by using a part of the empirical world – which is already intelligible to us because it occupies an accidental role in an already established logical space – as a criterion. The logical space from which the empirical object was selected in this sense grounds the logical space inaugurated by the stipulation of the new rule. (For instance, if we were to use a flower-pot as a sample of what a flowerpot is, and do so in virtue of the accidental functional features it has – features which are intelligible to us partly because we recognise the object to have

certain spatial properties – the functional properties which we are using as criteria in one logical space are in this sense grounded by accidental features of another logical space).

Contrasting these two different ways of talking about a rule's grounding makes it clear that there is a notion of justification operative in the former case which is not operative in the latter. In the first case the empirical situations which ground the applicable rules (in the context of this chapter, all the *space occupying stuff* we have seen), are used to articulate what does and what does not count as an internal relation within that logical space, and in that sense, empirical items within the same logical space provide their own justification. This is the sense in which Steiner's natural selection story applies to canonical cases. Canonical cases thus lack an external criterion for correctness in the same manner as I claim instances of perceptual experience do.

The worry is that in the second case we have *the same* sort of application of rules going on, but in their first instance there is nothing to justify their application, and as the successful application is what gives them content, they are groundless, and so contentless, and inasmuch as this is the case, what their application amounts to is a mystery. We thus have a problem of the same form we have been exploring in the last two chapters – a disconnection between normative force and normative authority.

It is not clear, however, that in the second case it is appropriate to use the term 'grounding' in *the same sense* as 'grounding' was used in the first case. For the grounds are not applying a constraint upon which empirical object we select to use as a rule, they are rather providing an already normatively and modally structured backdrop which we can go on to use in various ways, and cannot use in other ways. The grounds are thus a prerequisite of an open-ended group of '*ways of going on*'<sup>19</sup>; they *enable* us to go on in a variety of ways, but they do not justify us in taking any one of those ways up.

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<sup>19</sup> This is a term of art I borrow from discussion surrounding Wittgenstein's treatment of rule-following (*PI* 143-242). It refers to the indeterminate array of ways of fulfilling any given rule (cf. 1.32) ; these are *ways of going on*. If one accepts, as I do, that neither normative force nor normative authority should be privileged, then the term *ways of going on* also lends itself to a way of talking of particular parts of our normative lives – practices, associations, basic judgements, et cetera – for which there is no further analysis to give. If the arguments of this thesis hold, then *ways of going on* are internally related to parts of the empirical world.

It is, then, in this sense that the enabling grounds provided by a prior logical space are arbitrary: there is no sense to the *correct* or *incorrect* selection of a new criterion from those grounds; the grounds, in virtue of being an already established logical space, are only providing candidates which are available for use as criteria in some ways but not in others. This then is an internal relation which does not justify: if the grounding provided by the prior logical space had not been the way it was, then this particular rule would not be available.

So, if 'content' here means something which is in accord or is not in accord with some criteria for correctness, the question of what gives content to non-canonical uses of a rule is a non-question; the question of what justifies *in the sense of making correct* the use of a new rule is a non-question. That sense of 'justify' does not apply here, for in this situation a new rule is being tried out as a way to inaugurate a useful logical space; the role of a novel rule itself is not that of an object to be compared with reality to find out if it is representing reality correctly or not. The only sense in which it might be justified or not is if we find something to do with it; once we have found something to do with it, however, and we talk of this usefulness as grounding the application of the rule, we are already talking of 'grounds' in the sense of one part of the same logical space grounding another. For the foregoing reason we ought only to give sense to talking of grounds-*qua*-justification once a rule is already on its way to being canonised.

Another question is what gives a novel criterion for rule use content in the sense of giving it a modal-cum-normative structure. The answer here is simply that it has such a structure because it has been selected from a place which is already structured in that way – it has been selected from a prior position within an already established logical space. If we then ask why the prior logical space had such a structure, unless we will be happy with receiving the same sort of answer again, we will slip back into harbouring a tacit desire for an external criterion for correctness.

The impulse to confuse the two different uses of the notion of content we have just seen distinguished is an impulse for all content to be content only if it is accountable to something else. At the level of a whole system of internal relations (systems within

which we do make sense of accountability), though, it is not clear that this requirement makes sense.

Because it is inappropriate to ask for a grounds-qua-justification for novel usages, then, it is inappropriate to ask for an explanation of the applicability of novel rules. To ask such a question would be to ask for a criterion of correctness which is externally related to the application of the rule. Novel uses are, in successful cases, the inauguration of the recognition of the sort of basic empirical regularities which it is not the job of philosophy to explain. They are the basis for comparing something already modally and normatively structured to something else already modally and normatively structured. Once comparisons are made, rules either find a home in practices and the world, or they do not. If they do, then these rules are endowed with sense, if they do not, then they drop away. How normative authority and normative force connect in novel situations is thus explained away, for if no useful comparison between the already normatively and modally structured part of the empirical world which we are holding fixed and the normatively and modally structured part of the empirical world which we are investigating obtains, then the novel rule drops away.

## **2.6 Summary**

The discussion of the 2.4s has been quick and abstract because it is only intended as a way to give an overview of the agenda for the next two chapters, and as a promissory note written for further description of a way to think of bedrock levels of normativity (such as the normativity exhibited by perceptual experience) as being criterion-less, and thus escaping from the problems I examined in this chapter and the previous one.

In summary, Steiner tacitly presupposed the need for an ontogenetic account of the applicability of novel rules by: i) presuming that a rule must be grounded-qua-justified in order to be intelligible as a rule; ii) creating the apparent need to account for how some rules could be given to us in, as it were, a pre-hardened form. Giving such an explanation as the apparent need stated in (ii) demands, however, would be to give an ontogenetic explanation of the sort which Steiner quite rightly asserts that it is not the job of philosophy to give.

This line of thought carries across to norms involved in perception in the following way: we know from considering the failings of Dualism that there is no sense to thinking of relation between our experience of the world and the world we refer to as external. For if *perceptions of objects* and *objects* were externally related, Dualism (or bad Monism) would be true. This may at first seem troubling: how could the norms we already have be guaranteed to apply to novel experiences; why should they be constantly extensible in this way? The answer is that they do not have to come with a guarantee and there is no *should* about it. Objects of perception can be so only inasmuch as the norms relating objects to one another already apply, and inasmuch as the objects of perception do fit into some logical space, we have been presented with some new grounds-*qua*-justifications for those norms and, potentially, grounds-*qua*-enablements for other norms. We are constantly presented with novelty in perceptual experience inasmuch as we are constantly presented with candidates for new normative authorities – stuff which bears particular modal relations to other stuff largely irrespectively of what we do – but this sort of presentation requires no external criteria.

## **2.7 A Link to Chapter 3**

The agenda is now as follows: in the next chapter I will make explicit the difference between:

- The response to the synthetic a priori made by the Kantian transcendental idealist – where Kantian transcendental idealism is thought of as a limiting case of theories which hold to a sort of scheme-world dualism but deny a scheme-experience dualism.
- The response of those in the lineage of transcendental idealist who allow objects to ground our conceptual scheme and thus appear to collapse the scheme-experience dualism and the scheme-world dualism.
- The response of the transcendental idealist who does not oppose scheme to content by only talking of scheme, but justifies this move by way of a metaphysical picture which tacitly draws bounds to sense.

I intend to demonstrate that none of these responses works. I will then differentiate the later Wittgenstein's approach from each transcendental idealist approach by identifying

a different notion of arbitrariness as operative in his descriptions of our normative lives (a notion which is consistent with the world itself forming part of our grammar and which, in being so, affords no space for scheme-world dualisms).

Following this, in Chapter 4, I will generalise the self-undermining form of the problem with transcendental idealism in all its forms, and return to the thought that we invoke a version of transcendental idealism if we presume sense to have determinate prerequisites in the way in which I suggested Steiner did earlier (cf. 2.5, 4.22-4.25). Then I discuss what it means to drop the idea of determinate prerequisites of sense, and allow the world itself to play a role in our grammar.

In the final chapter, I will apply these thoughts to the debate surrounding causality in order to show that there are norms operative there too. I will show that if we follow the same line of resistance to transcendental idealism there as we do in the next two chapters, we will see that our concept of causality is unaccountable to any external standard and internally related to the empirical world. This move is particularly important to make, because making it allays the urge to think of the empirical world as essentially merely empirical – merely empirical in that it is bereft of normativity and modality – an urge which is bound to reinstate pernicious scheme-content dichotomies.



### **Chapter 3: Transcendental Idealism**

In chapters 1 and 2 I have described theoretical problems concerning the disconnection of normative force and normative authority, identified an underlying cause – the presumption of an external, or weakly internal, relation of normative force and normative authority – and given a brief overview of what doing otherwise – treating normative force and normative authority as internally related – would amount to.

In this chapter I return to the transcendental idealist picture and suggest we see it as mis-picturing of the internal relation between normative force and normative authority. For the Kantian transcendental idealist normative authorities sit within the realm of normative force because it is transcendently established that, for there to be normative authorities at all, there must already be a normative context in place which constrains what the empirical world can be in such a way that empirical world is of a form to which our concepts apply. Examining this picture under the aegis of the thoughts I sketched in 2.5-2.6 will make explicit the unsatisfying nature of the putative solution offered by the transcendental idealist to the problems under consideration.

To be a transcendental idealist in the manner of Kant is to hold that:

- a) we cannot know the world except as it is subject to the prior structures imposed by the mind.
- b) the world we know of – empirical reality – cannot be the world as it is in itself.

What this concatenation of claims inevitably leads us to is some form of a scheme-content dichotomy, for there are only two ways of reading the relation between (a) and (b), either.

- 1) What we experience – the empirical world – is shaped by the structures referred to in (a).
- or,
- 2) What we experience – the empirical world – is what can be presented in conformity with the structures referred to in (a).

On both 1 and 2, a key feature of the relation between a and b is the exercise of a constraint upon the possibility of the form of the empirical world, viz. the world of experience. In (1), the constraint is one upon which, for there to be content, that content must itself be produced by some prior activity; whereas in (2), the constraint is more liberal: the world which we experience and to which we refer is that which happens to fit those resources with which we bring the world into view.<sup>20</sup>

On both accounts, it may appear that whatever does the constraining or organizing cannot itself be a part of the empirical world. This would apparently be so if we held to the sort of position we saw Steiner explain away at 2.52. Such a position is that there are rules which apply to the empirical and are exceptionless. The rules are exceptionless because they express necessary truths. Inasmuch as the rules express necessary truths, contingent facts about the empirical world are intrinsically incapable of grounding the capacities required to enable us to use such rules.

For the Kantian, then, what the categorical concepts<sup>21</sup> express

... are structural features of the framework within which alone it is possible to apply any concepts, make any judgments, including ordinary empirical descriptive ones. (Brandom 2010; 2)

If we are to operate within a Kantian schema, we ought to think that both the norms underwriting the command of descriptive language of Chapter 2 (relations of inclusion, entailment, and exclusion, between the uses of parts of language) and those underwriting the ability to entertain the perceptual content involving objects of Chapter 2 (the compatibility and incompatibility of points of view upon *space occupying stuff*) are instances of very basic expressions of such general structural features. With regard to these norms, we have found their representation to require a modal vocabulary. So with regard to the possession of these categorial concepts, we ought to be able to say that

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<sup>20</sup> I take the following schematisation and characterisation from Sacks (2001; 198-204).

<sup>21</sup> 'Categorical concepts' is a Kantian term of art. It refers to the sort of prior system of norms I summarised in 1.32. These are the (for Kant essential) structures of the mind which are the prerequisite for all human cognition (of the empirical world or otherwise). For a fuller description of Kant's picture of the relation between the categories, the empirical world and substance see 5.1.

... in being able to apply any ground-level empirical concepts [or even in being able to simply perceive objects in space], one already knows how to do everything one needs to know how to do in order to apply the categorial concepts. ... [T]here are no particular empirical descriptive concepts one must be able to apply in order to have implicit mastery of what is expressed by categorial concepts such as the modal ones (though perhaps one must have some descriptive concepts or other). (*Ibid*)

As such, because the categorial concepts are independent of any particular empirical concepts, acceptance of either reading of what the efficacy of the categories amounts to within a Kantian picture – (1) or (2) – *seems* to necessitate a transcendence of whatever it is that does the constraining relative to the result of that constraint. What the Kantian picture then leaves us with is a clear difference in kind between the framework that allows the possibility of empirical experience, and the results of empirical experience; or put differently, between matters of fact and matters concerning the very possibility of facts; namely, we are left with the epitome of a scheme-content dichotomy.

If we do accept this sort of difference in kind between the framework which allows empirical experience and what is empirically experienced, a promising feature of pursuing the transcendental project comes into view: the promise of finding a way of saying how our normative scheme has application to the world of objects by making our normative scheme a constitutive prerequisite of the world of objects. This appears to demystify the idea of the *synthetic a priori* by telling a story about how the two different kinds may be in harmony with one another within the empirical world. The rules apply because they are partly constitutive of the instances of the empirical concepts to which they apply. The way in which they constitute the empirical is by bringing into view particular aspects of substance.

Thus, on such a picture, a weakly internal relation between our empirical concepts and the world we experience is created by way of a prior external relation or weakly internal relation between the categories and substance.<sup>22</sup> The categories and substance

<sup>22</sup> Which sort of relation applies here depends on whether we think the relation between the categories and substance is necessarily the way it is if both relata happen to exist – for Kant the relation is not necessary, so the relation is external. If the reader is in doubt about this, or in doubt about my general characterisation of the Kantian transcendental idealist, it is worth skipping ahead to read 5.1-5.2 and then returning here. I only omit discussing the matter here because it presents a lengthy digression from the current aim of the text (which is only to establish the general form of a problematic

are independently extant and of distinct metaphysical kinds, and the empirical world results from the fact that they happen to relate. The form of the empirical world, then, is so because of the relation between the categories and substance. The resultant form of the world stands in a relation of isomorphism to the form of our thoughts about the world. As such, we could not have thought about the empirical world unless the empirical world already had the form it did, and if we do have such thought it is necessarily possibly applicable to the empirical world; but, that the empirical world has the form it does is dependent upon the prior constraints imposed upon the form of the empirical world by the categories.

Once we take full stock of what positing this difference in kind between the categories and substance amounts to, though, a key problem with a straight-forward Kantian position emerges. Glock articulates the problem here:

Kant tried to demarcate what we can know (phenomena or possible objects of experience) from what we cannot know (things in themselves that transcend all possible experience). From Jacobi to Bradley this has provoked the complaint that one cannot draw the distinction between the knowable realm of appearances and the unknowable realm of things in themselves without tacitly presupposing some knowledge of the latter. (Glock 1997; 291)

The problem is: in order to accept Kant's ingenious solution we must come to think that the referent of our talk of the empirical world is just what of the anormative realm of substance has been brought into view by our normative constraints, and so is of a form to which norms are de facto applicable. Yet, to talk of a constraint in the first place, we must picture what is being constrained, and this is self-undermining: we must have an intelligible conception of the constrained, which is *ex hypothesi* outside of the bounds of intelligibility. Furthermore, we must also have an intelligible idea of rules which provide their own criteria for application in order to make sense of the categories.

A Kantian transcendental idealist picture thus provides us a starting point by both responding to the problems we have been surveying regarding the association of

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response to the problems brought out in chapters 1 and 2).

normative force and normative authority, and also *epitomising* such problems. They collapse both scheme-experience, and a kind of scheme-world, dualism but only at the cost of instantiating a deeper scheme-world dualism. (For a fuller explication of Kant's view of the relation between the categories and substance cf. 5.1; I pass over the details here because I am presently only interested in establishing the form of the transcendental idealist response to the problems surrounding the applicability of norms to the world).

### **3.1 Collapsing Dualisms**

As we saw by briefly looking at Steiner's account in the last chapter, a promising way to avoid the problems just expressed is to find a way of showing that it is a mistake to think that normative force must ensue from something of a different kind to the empirical.

To do so one might maintain, as Steiner thinks Wittgenstein does for mathematical rules, that we can account for a sort of necessity sufficient to explain why the empirical world is bound by rules which do not themselves seem amenable to revision in the light of empirical experience, without, in doing so, mentioning anything but our empirical situation; that is, we must find a way to describe the existence of such rules as grounded in, but not identical to, contingent empirical regularities.

Sacks' conviction is that the later Wittgenstein tries to make just this sort of move when moving from the idea of *simples* in the *Tractatus* to the idea of *samples* in his later philosophy; a move from holding that there are basic determinate constituents of language which are prerequisites of the possibility of sense, to parts of empirical reality being prerequisites of sense within particular logical spaces. (Consideration of what Sacks' has to say will be fruitful in illustrating the transition from the straight forward Kantian transcendental idealism to the more subtle forms I listed under 'Confusion 3' on page 8.)

This move, according to Sacks, promises to avoid the problems of appealing to a realm which is different in kind from the empirical whilst retaining the transcendental idealist project. By Sacks' lights, Wittgenstein attempts to fulfil this promise by holding onto

the idea that our experience of the empirical world is dependent upon some prior structure while gaining more clarity about the concept of a *limit* – of why we cannot refer to the prior conditions on empirical experience by using the same conceptual apparatus that we use to refer to the empirical world.

The kernel of this idea, according to Sacks, is found at the very beginning of the *Tractatus*. It is found in a recognition of the problem with Kant's method reflected in the self consciously self-undermining claims of the *Tractatus*. The idea is this: the idea of a limit to thought cannot be the drawing of a boundary; this is because if we are to make sense of talk of a boundary then we would have to talk about things being one way or another on both sides, but as we are talking about the limits of language here, and language and the possibility of things being one way or another come together, any notion of reference to the other side of the boundary fails *tout court*.

If this Tractarian thought was all Wittgenstein had to give, it clearly would not be enough. On a metaphysical reading of the *Tractatus*, upon which there is a mirroring relation between the form facts can take and the necessary structures of our language –

[a] proposition must be determinate because there must be a precise configuration of simple elements which either verifies or falsifies it. The logical requirement that the sense of propositions be determinate mirrors the metaphysical nature of facts, and implies that the analysis of all propositions terminates with logically proper names which stand for indestructible simple objects. A proposition can depict a precise configuration of elements only if its ultimate constituents stand in a one-to-one correlation with these elements. Otherwise, the fact that its ultimate constituents are combined in a certain way does not depict a specific combination of things. (Glock 1996; 99)

– It is clear that in the supposition of the picturing relation between facts and potential configurations of simple objects a remnant of Kant's problem still stands. As Glock puts it:

Kant explains the possibility of empirical and mathematical knowledge and the impossibility of the transcendent knowledge sought by dogmatic metaphysics. But he fails to explain the possibility of his own transcendental insight into that demarcation,

especially since that insight seems to draw the bounds of sense at the limits of empirical knowledge. (Glock 1997; 296)

In like vein to the Kantian-style transcendental idealist, then, the Wittgenstein of the metaphysically-read *Tractatus* fails to explain his insights into the limits of sense because the articulation of those limits would require the intelligibility of the relation between the determinacy of sense and the set of possible combinations of simple objects. This relation, however, is a prerequisite of the possibility of sense and inasmuch as it *is* this, is outside of the realm of the sayable. The demand for the guarantee of determinacy at the level of the prerequisites of sense thus generates a difference in kind - between the realm of sense and the realm of the prerequisites of sense - which is as problematic as Kant's.

So far, then, Sacks' idea is that there is a common form in Kant's approach to the preconditions of Knowledge and the metaphysically-read early Wittgenstein's approach to the prerequisites of sense: in each case it is recognised that for a particular sort of conceptual activity to be possible there must be a commensurability in form between our conceptual capacities and the way the world is – the two must be internally related. For both Kant and Wittgenstein, the explanation of mind/world commensurability invokes a metaphysical determinacy which is a prerequisite of the relation of norms and substance, and which ought, according to their own constraints (upon, respectively, the possibility of knowledge and the possibility of sense) to be, respectively, unknowable of and so unspeakable of, and simply unspeakable of.

For the Kantian transcendental idealist, then, this determinacy ensues from a metaphysical external relation between the categories and the realm of substance, whereas for Wittgenstein metaphysically-read there is no such theorising about the nature of the relation: it is simply a prerequisite of the possibility of sense that such a relation between language and the empirical world *must* be so, and for the reasons afflicting the Kantian account, we can not directly say so. What both do, however, is invoke determinate criteria for sense which stand apart from the relations which, they hold, would give talk of those criteria sense.

We ought to pause to consider if this is indeed what is going on in the *Tractatus*. For it

would be odd to respond to a problem by self consciously instantiating it, unless this instantiation itself had a further role. Also, as we will see at 3.12, taking the metaphysically-read *Tractatus* to be the picture the later Wittgenstein is reacting against may well lead to misinterpretation of his later work.

### **3.11 Moving from a Metaphysical Problem to a Methodological Problem**

At *T* 6.54 Wittgenstein states

My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)

He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.

Wittgenstein metaphysically-read, thus still has to be read as being well aware of the problematic isomorphism identified in 3.1, and thus as seemingly taking Kant's "critical stance one step further, with the self-refuting result that critical philosophy falls foul of its own strictures" (Glock 1997; 296).

If Wittgenstein had some self consciousness about "critical philosophy falling foul of its own strictures" (*ibid.*) in this way, making a metaphysical reading of the *Tractatus* may seem a poor choice; it may instead seem prudent to find a way of reading the *Tractatus* such that its arguments display the way "critical philosophy falls foul of its own strictures" (*ibid.*) as a way revealing that the very idea of a determinate relation between extra-conceptual facts and conceptual facts is nonsense.

Resolute readers of the *Tractatus* take up the project of maintaining that Wittgenstein was not trying to show some metaphysical truth despite his avowal of the incoherence of doing so; and they do so in a particular manner. Their strategy is to deny that the seemingly metaphysical propositions of the *Tractatus* make any sense at all. The role of such propositions is thus *purely* therapeutic inasmuch as they "reveal (through the employment of mere nonsense) that what appears to be substantial nonsense is mere nonsense" (Conant 2000; 196). Thus, on this sort of view, rather than nonsense being acceptable because it somehow allows us a glimpse beyond the restrictions of our



conceptual scheme in order to show us a substantial metaphysical truth, the nonsense is useful because it patently reveals the incoherence of the former project.

The problem a resolute reading of the *Tractatus* has to face is making sense of the efficacy of *mere nonsense*.

[T]hey face a difficulty in explaining how the *Tractatus* could contain-or give expression to-any insights into the logic of language (for example, concerning the non-representational character of logical constants). Accordingly, for example, Hacker blames Conant and Diamond (rightly or wrongly) for throwing away the logical insights Wittgenstein expresses in connection with his critique of Frege and Russell: "Throwing away the ladder is one thing, throwing away the baby together with the bathwater is another." (Kuusela 2008; 62)

The reader of the *Tractatus* now looks to have a stark choice to make between endorsing either self-contradiction or ineffectual nonsense. To avoid seeing these unappealing options as exhaustive McGinn, Kuusela, and others have suggested that we might re-construe what the propositions in question are intended to show by making an *elucidatory-reading* of the *Tractatus*. On such a view the propositions in question are re-construed as aimed at revealing neither the merelessness of substantial nonsense nor some ineffable truth about the realm beyond language. Rather, the propositions are intended to elucidate relations which are internal to the way in which we represent the world, and, for that reason, have nothing to do with facts about a language-independent world. Key to making sense of this position is embracing a view of the *Tractatus* upon which the concept of an object operative within it is that of a normative role player. This brings us back to the idea of objects which guided the last chapters treatment of objects of perception.

...the concept of an object is properly understood as an intensional one, which emerges in the context of understanding the role that is played by the logical constituents of propositions, and it cannot be understood independently of this. (McGinn 2006; 5)

To accept such an idea of objects is already operative in the *Tractatus*, and so to untether the idea of simple objects from the view of them as metaphysical rather than

logical entities, then, we need a way of seeing the *Tractatus* as taking a step towards doing so by treating objects in the way found in the *Investigations*, where

...the ostensive definition of a name, which we give on a particular occasion and in which we point at an object while pronouncing the name, employs the object as an instrument of language. The ostensive definition, Wittgenstein suggests, can be seen as the expression of a rule for the use of a sign, and the object that we gesture towards in giving the definition is used as a means to express the rule. In this case, the object itself is employed within the symbolism: it is 'not something represented, but ... a means of representation' (PI 50). (McGinn 2006; 301)

For, on such a reading of the *Tractatus* we can embrace part of the positive project which McGinn, in the passage below, claims Pears attributes to the early Wittgenstein (that upon which Wittgenstein's logical analysis reveals that names of simple objects - objects of which it makes no sense to talk of existing or not existing - are prerequisites of the description of contingent states of affairs), and we can do so without buying into the isomorphic picture which goes along with taking those objects to be both outside of language and somehow essentially related to it; a picture which would require an explanation of the relation between concepts and objects *qua* extra linguistic items is avoided.

Here, then, is what McGinn takes to be Pears' overly metaphysical view:

...according to Pears, Wittgenstein's early view is that the possibility of factual discourse depends upon the existence of simple objects, each with its intrinsic set of possibilities for combining with other objects in states of affairs. These simple objects correspond to the simple names in a fully analyzed proposition. A name is 'first . . . attached to an object in something like the way envisaged by Russell', but it continues to represent the object 'only as long as the possibilities presented by the proposition in which it occurs are real possibilities for that object' (Pears, 1987, 103–4). A name's possibilities for combining with other names to form propositions must mirror the intrinsic possibilities of the object for combining with other objects in states of affairs. Thus, the logical structure of language is imposed on it from outside 'by the ultimate structure of reality' (Pears, 1987, 27). It is in virtue of this isomorphism between the logical structure of language and the independently constituted structure of reality that the connection

between language and the world is made. (McGinn 2007; 200)

What is left if we can drop the idea that the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* thought that names are ‘first . . . attached to an object in something like the way envisaged by Russell’ (*ibid*), then, is a way to avoid the Kantian problem of talking about the bounds of sense, and the dropping of anxieties about the relation between what lies outside and what is inside that boundary. We are left with a view upon which simple objects are individuated only by their place within logical space, and, importantly, upon which the existence of such simple objects cannot be considered as a *contingent* matter (cf. 4.24). The existence of simple objects cannot be contingent because they are a prerequisite of contingency – of the possibility of finding propositions to be true or false – and, likewise, the logical connectives cannot be representational because only pictures represent and the logical constants are prerequisites of picturing.

But making space for insights into the non-representational character of logical constants, and the non-contingency of whatever it is that provides a framework for contingent judgements, whilst not transcending a place within language, is *only* a step, and it is important to see that the reason that it is only a step is that the *Tractatus* maintains a metaphysical view of language itself. It maintains a view upon which simple objects (which we need to remember are no longer to be thought of as extra-linguistic qua non-intensional) are essentially determinate.

Here we again see a problem of the same form as the problem with Kantian style transcendental idealism – a *prima facie* metaphysical problem – revealed as a more general methodological problem. For, although the transcendental constraint in question has now become a purely logical, rather than metaphysical, matter (viz. a concern about the essential structures of language rather than essential metaphysical structures), it is still a transcendental constraint: the presumptions of the common essence of concepts – Kuusela's characterisation of this presumption is "Every proposition says: This is how things stand." (2008; 106) - and of the determinacy of sense – that every assertion of how things stand corresponds to some configuration of simple objects - represent necessary facts about the nature of language and the prerequisites of descriptive uses of language. As such, even if we drop the metaphysical interpretation of the *Tractatus*, and take the early Wittgenstein to be

engaged in nothing but an investigation internal to language, a close relative of Kant's problem still stands.

Importantly, though, the aforementioned problem stands in the elucidatory-*Tractatus* in the form of a dogmatic presupposition about how language must essentially be, which is much easier to miss the import of than it would be if the problem stood in the form of an isomorphic relation between two metaphysically different kinds (an isomorphism between simple objects and names of the sort which the metaphysically-read *Tractatus* asserts). So, if we take Wittgenstein to be taking on a *dogmatic* view of language, rather than the *metaphysical picture* he explicitly takes to be problematic, we do not have to read Wittgenstein quite so uncharitably.

More importantly still: as we will see in the next section, given an elucidatory reading, the presumption of the determinacy of sense can be dropped in a way which leaves much less conceptual baggage than dropping the view that sense is determinate because there is a metaphysically grounded internal relation between language and the world. For, dropping determinacy from the elucidatory-*Tractatus* – a view upon which the empirical world and logic (or grammar) are already internally related in a way which does not stand either in need of further explanation (or stand in need of our acceptance of an explanation being unavailable for merely epistemological reasons) – does not tempt us to find a substitute for the explanatory work that a mirroring relation between language and the world was doing in the metaphysical-*Tractatus*, or to accept the incoherent idea of an epistemological veil created by languages inability to reveal how things are in themselves (a temptation we saw Steiner succumb to in his treatment of novel mathematical rules (cf. 2.5-2.6)).

### **3.12 The Transition to the Investigations**

I want to stress again that I am not here concerned with matters of pure exegesis. I am looking to the shift between the early and later Wittgenstein's treatment of the prerequisites of sense, because attending to some of the details of the shift affords us a demonstration of a way of opting out of the transcendental idealist problems without invoking more problematic metaphysical pictures.

In the transition from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* we see the commitment to the prior determinacy of the structure of language dropped. Given that the problems afflicting the *Tractatus* that are salient for our concerns (whether simples were extra-linguistic or not) were of a Kantian pedigree, we can cast this move as follows (remembering that 'world' can be read intensionally, or, given a non-metaphysical reading, non-intensionally):

Wittgenstein's later reaction against [the *Tractatus*] is, in effect, a reaction against scheme-world dualism. One area in which the reaction is explicit is his discussion of following a rule. Wittgenstein argued that the world does not have a determinate structure, in virtue of which one thing (or one use of a word) is, absolutely objectively, the same as another or not. So it is a mistake to think that what counts as going on in the same way is determined by the real nature of things, absolutely independent of what we find it natural to class together, once trained; how we find it natural to go on plays some part in determining the categories we grasp and, therefore, in fixing what counts as going on in the same way. (Child 1994; p60)

Given that Wittgenstein's "later reaction against [the *Tractatus*] is, in effect, a reaction against scheme-world dualism" (*Ibid*), and that there are two broad ways to read the *Tractatus*, we ought to pause and note how the dropping of the assumption of the determinacy of sense may be factored into a story about the transition between the early and later Wittgenstein's work for both metaphysical and non-metaphysical readings of the *Tractatus*.

Here it is important to be clear that what follows is hypothetical. It is a claim about why it would be easier to slip from reading the *Tractatus* metaphysically into missing the wider import of the *Investigations*. It does not preclude someone reading the *Tractatus* metaphysically for exegetical reasons whilst still reading the *Investigations* aright. I am thus presenting this etiological hypothesis only as an heuristic tool with which to examine the relation between certain philosophical errors, in the hope of clarifying a way of moving away from the picture which motivates such errors.

For the metaphysical reader, the dropping of the determinacy of sense is very closely tied to the dropping of a picture on which a *mirroring relation* between simple objects

and language is a necessary prerequisite of sense. If one takes sense's determinacy in the *Tractatus* to ensue from the necessity of language's propensity to picture language-independent-facts, and one takes such a mirroring relation to be what Wittgenstein is referring to when he refers to a internal relation between language and the world, then it is all too easy to take a turn away from determinacy to be the same as a turn away from sense being internally related to the way the world is. That is, it is all too easy to construe Wittgenstein's turn away from the determinacy of sense as a turn away from the view that grammar and the empirical world are internally related, and as a turn towards the sort of view of grammar upon which grammar is arbitrary because it bears an external relation to the empirical world. (That is, it might motivate one to take up the sort of view we saw Steiner attributes to Wittgenstein at 2.5; and the sort of view we saw at 2.5-2.54 is not necessary to hold if we accept the the world is internally related to the possibility of parts of grammar but does not *determine* sense).

The dropping of the commitment to a mirroring relation, for such a reader, frees Wittgenstein from a commitment to any metaphysical claim about a relation between epistemology and ontology which is conceptually prior to language use. Once the relation is dropped, we are seemingly free to construe the logic of language as not tied to any *essential* way the world is, but rather as formed through a *reciprocal* relation with the way the world is. The problem then, however, is of the same form as Steiner's problem with mathematical novelty (cf. 2.54): we seem to lose contact with the world, for how could we make sense of such a reciprocal relation without invoking a conception of rules which are binding prior to their application to the objects to which they apply, or objects which tell us how to apply rules to them?

For the non-metaphysical reader, on the other hand, there was no mirroring relation on the scene in the first place; the dropping of the determinacy of sense amounts only to the dropping of an unwarranted assumption about the way language must be. (Which is, as we saw (2.5-2.54), and will see in more detail (4), is also to drop a prerequisite of the view that all rule use must be *accountable* to a criterion of correctness). Thus, in a similar way to the transition from the metaphysically-read-*Tractatus* to the *Investigations*, we lose any sense to there being a difference in kind between the way we go on and the reference of our talk about the world. The idea of the norms of language exerting constraint on anything extra-linguistic (in the sense of *anormative*

*stuff*), however, is not retained, for once we take on an intensional view of objects, the opposition between language and its objects is taken out of play.

This split in approaches represents what I take to be a deep divide in philosophical method, and, importantly for this thesis, the difference between seeming to have excised rid of destructive scheme-content dichotomies and actually having excised destructive scheme content dichotomies. On one side a metaphysical relation between scheme and content is dropped, but in doing so the scheme is left problematically disconnected from its content inasmuch as the content must either be interpreted in order to be available to the scheme or be deemed unavailable from the point of view of the scheme; whilst on the other side there was never any mirroring relation to drop.

I will now work towards making this divide clearer by using a series of examples starting with what I take to be Sacks' misreading of Wittgenstein; I do this because I take the manner of this misreading to contain a subtle mistake which instantiates the above link between reading the *Tractatus* metaphysically and and taking the later Wittgenstein to be asserting that grammar and the empirical world are arbitrarily-*qua*-externally related. Once again, I am suggesting that whilst considering these exegetical matters may seem otiose, nevertheless it is worthwhile to consider such issues because they bring out a way of fruitfully turning away from the transcendental idealist picture.

### **3.2 Sacks' Reading**

Sacks takes a metaphysical reading of the *Tractatus*, and so takes the later Wittgenstein's work to be responding to the metaphysical *Tractatus*: for Sacks, the later Wittgenstein is attempting to retain the Kantian promise of avoiding the problem of the synthetic *a priori* by claiming that there is a necessary harmony between mind and world (because what “can count as an object of experience” is in part determined by whatever normative context is a prerequisite of that sort of reference), without buying into a metaphysical scheme-content dichotomy by requiring the normative context to be intelligible independently of the empirical world. Rather, scheme and content are of the same kind: any given content is likewise capable of serving as a prerequisite of the possibility of sense and any prerequisite of sense was once an empirical fact.

For Sacks, the later Wittgenstein thus looks to have a chance of reinvigorating the Kantian picture: with the notion of a metaphysical distinction between scheme and content excised, it looks like we no longer need to face the problems Kant faced regarding saying the unsayable, for any given prerequisite of sense will be a prerequisite of sense because it itself is sayable within a different normative context.

Given the new role for the empirical in making the empirical intelligible, we can also tell a certain sort of story about the centrality of the notion of practices to Wittgenstein's thought. Practices – our customary ways of going on – are at bedrock the holding of certain arbitrary sets of empirical facts as indubitable in order that they might support the production of sense, and the possibility of empirical experience, elsewhere. And thus, we get to the thought that,

...in the absence of the possibility of any such external source of transcendental necessities, it is the empirical that itself determines – rather than merely reveals – what appear to be transcendental limitations: which moves are possible within our form of life, and which are not. (Sacks 2001; 212)

Sacks crystallises this difference between the Kantian and the Wittgensteinian approaches by contrasting transcendental constraints with transcendental features:

...a transcendental constraint indicates a dependence of empirical possibilities on a non-empirical structure, say, the structure of anything that can count as a mind. Such constraints will determine non-empirical limits of possible forms of experience. This gives us the direction of determination that runs..from the mind...to empirical forms of experience which can be actualised. A merely transcendental feature...is significantly weaker. Transcendental features indicate the limitations implicitly determined by a range of available practices: a range comprising all those practices to which further alternatives cannot be made intelligible to those engaged in them. (*Ibid*; 213)

The consequence of holding that Wittgenstein is operating with transcendental features rather than constraints, then, *seems* just to be that we take Wittgenstein's Grammatical statements to be, in the way I endorsed in the last chapter, engaged in a recursive relation with the world.



With this kinship and subtle difference between Sacks' Kant and Sacks' Wittgenstein demonstrated, Sacks' further claim is that we see transcendental idealism transformed, between Kant and Wittgenstein, from a position characterised by the undesirable T1 (for the reasons given at 3-3.12) to a position characterised by T2:

(T1) There are transcendental constraints imposed by the mind on what can count as an object of experience, such that we can know (experience) objects only in conformity with these constraints. (2001; 201)

(T2) Anything that is a possible object of experience is ultimately an expression of our activity – where that is taken to include human concerns, interests, actions, beliefs. (*ibid*; 206)

So far this all seems fine. It seems to accord with the account of the relation between norms and the empirical world I sketched at the end of the last chapter (cf. 2.4-2.5).

Sacks' account of the later Wittgenstein, though, does only *seem* fine. Sacks' image of the reciprocal relation between norms and the stuff of the world we experience which is found in the later Wittgenstein's work requires there to be determinate prerequisites of sense in the manner which made problems for Steiner's account of novel mathematical rules in the last chapter.

We can see this problem in action, as we did with Steiner (cf. 2.53), by identifying a concern Sacks has with Wittgenstein that he ought not have if he were to take to heart the idea that grammar and the world are internally related. By identifying the concern as a specious one we are thus identifying a symptom of tacitly retaining the transcendental idealist style mistake of allowing that there are norms which provide their own criteria for application and that such norms are required to ensure we are in touch with an objective world – a concern which could only take hold on a picture upon which norms are externally related, or weakly internally related, to the world (cf. 2.54).

### **3.21 Sacks' Misplaced Concern**

Sacks is concerned that T2 suffers from a closely kindred affliction to that of T1. Whereas T1 carries a tacit commitment to an unacceptable idea of the boundary between whatever does the constraining and the stuff which constitutes the empirical world, T2 evades this commitment at the cost of an “unrestrained empirical relativism” (2001; 216) which is incurred by abandoning such boundaries altogether. The idea is that, because, in the way outlined above, the transcendental features which serve as the prerequisites of any given experience of the empirical world are themselves contingent upon there being a set of things which are themselves made intelligible only by recourse to further practices, contingent empirical facts ultimately set the horizons of the possible, and this is somehow problematic.

If the concern is that without some non-empirical basis for a scheme, we would lose the very possibility of sense because any one thing could, under a different description, be a different thing, such a concern would obviously have missed the point. For allowing that empirical objects serve as criteria within a particular scheme relativises the content of a claim being held true to that scheme. So there is no sense to the possibility of two different schemes expressing *the very same* content.

The more cogent concern<sup>23</sup> is that allowing that there are no transcendental constraints in our conceptual scheme stops us from meaningfully talking about the relative value, or status, of different human practices; that without some way of marking out different human practices as aimed at things more or less attached or detached from our interests, we have no way of distinguishing between the value of claims of, for instance, shamans and physicists. So, the thought would go, transcendental features, if workable, still need to be subject to some transcendental constraints.

Williams, in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (1985), makes a very clear case for an

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<sup>23</sup> Which does appear to be Sacks' concern for he later endorses trying out various transcendental features as part of project of “cognitive tourism” (2001; 305) which is the practice of picking up other cultures' transcendental features, and is aimed at discovering likely transcendental constraints by seeing which transcendental features are the most well used. So it seems Sacks' does think we can have practices which are unrestrained from our epistemic point of view, but are in fact somehow guided by the world.

The charge of relativism is not articulated very clearly anywhere in Sacks' work, however, which is why I turn to Williams (1985) (see below); I think we will see that ideas like *cognitive tourism* are confused when we assess Williams' views, so I will not pursue them overtly.

absolute conception of the world being a necessary precondition of the process of acquiring objective knowledge; so to play through Sacks' worry in the most charitable way I will now look to that work, and to a criticism McDowell makes of Williams' thought and Williams' opposition of his thought to that of Rorty. Doing so will show the more cogent concern I just expressed also to rest upon a tacit acceptance of either the anormative world guiding our concept application, or of rules which give their own criteria for application. Such theoretical entities are, as we have seen, symptomatic of an acceptance of grammar bearing an external, or weakly internal, relation to the world.

Here, though, matters become tricky: I also want to use the same interchange to illustrate a way in which Rorty, by attempting to explaining why there is no requirement for a transcendental constraint (given by a rule which intimates its own application or a part of the world which is a normative authority prior to having a place within a practice), ends up reinstating the very same transcendental idealist picture he is trying to eschew.

The ideas the examination of this dialectic will bring out will be the focus of the next chapter. There I will show that, for the reasons explored so far, while we want to avoid thinking that there are determinate prerequisites of sense (by allowing there are rules which provide their own criterion for application, or criteria for correctness which are so prior to their engagement with a system of rules), we do not want to justify doing so by opposing the realm of sense to some anormative realm and then arguing that the realm of sense must be autonomous with regard to to that anormative realm (rather, in the way I suggested at 2.5-2.6, logical spaces are autonomous in a way inclusive of the empirical world considered as already normative).

### **3.3 A World Already There: McDowell and Williams**

Williams' idea is roughly this: in order for us to recognise ourselves as making claims which are accountable to the world, we must conceive of the world as robustly separate from our practices. Thus the conception of the world we must aim at is non-perspectival in a way of which Williams takes scientific knowledge to be paradigmatic.

The basic idea behind the distinction between the scientific and the ethical, expressed in terms of convergence, is very simple. In scientific inquiry there should ideally be convergence on an answer, where the best explanation of the convergence involves the idea that the answer represents how things are; in the area of ethics...there is no such contingent hope. (1985; 136)

The problem with such a view of the ends of objective inquiry is not that it requires us to actually have access to any actually non-perspectival truths. Williams is very clear, in his recognition of the following “effective line of objection” (*ibid*) that we can have no such access. The objection is

..that no convergence of science, past or future, could possibly be explained in a meaningful way by reference to the way the world is, because there is an insoluble difficulty with the notion of “the world” as something that can determine belief. There is a dilemma. On the one hand the world may be characterised by our current beliefs about what it contains (*ibid*)

but in this case,

...our conception of the world as the object of our beliefs can do no better than repeat the beliefs we take to represent it. (*ibid*)

Whilst on the other hand, if

we try to form a view of some idea of the world which is prior to any description of it...then we have an empty notion of something unspecified and unspecifiable. (*ibid*)

There is something very sensible about this assessment inasmuch as it mirrors the worries with the (broadly) Kantian pictures. Williams' solution is to take the role of the idea of the non-perspectival then, not as an actual check, but as an ideal which we gain by

forming a picture of the world as “already there” in terms of some, but not all, of our beliefs and theories. In reflecting upon the world that is there anyway, independent of our experience, we must concentrate in the first instance not on what our beliefs are

about, but on how they represent what they are about. (*ibid*)

Which, again, seems absolutely right. The best we can do is work with the beliefs we have by comparing and contrasting them in order to see how they fit and do not fit with each other. Our idea of 'the world' just is whatever we use to hold each other to account when performing this procedure (which is not idealist – the world is not such because of our activities – rather, we should recall, objects are intensional in the sense McGinn brought out (see above), and as such there is no sense to use of 'objects' which ignores their intensional role ). So what is the problem?

The problem is this: the notion of the world as already there is being conflated with the notion of a world which is bare of normativity. We can see this if we return to Williams' use of the notion of the world as already there: that some facts have more of a non-perspectival character than others is being taken to play an epistemic role – that of allowing us to separate off matters where there are objective facts from those where there are none. To see that this role is being played, however, we must be able to tell which are which in some principled way. Yet, to have a principled way, one would have to be able to judge which facts had less reliance upon perspective than others, which seems to involve a privileged access of the sort which it was virtuous for Williams initially to avoid.

To play through the idea, let us start with a way in which ethical cases cannot be non-perspectival. McDowell suggests that we might think of ethical objectivity in the same way as we think of the objectivity of proof in mathematical cases. In such cases we think of the best reason to believe a claim as a reason which leaves us with 'nothing else to think on the matter'. In such cases,

...the explanation cannot be neutral as to the cogency of the proof; if it turned out that a supposed proof contained a mistake, one might still have an explanation of why people had converged on the belief, but it would not be the explanation one thought one had before the mistake emerged...Since such an explanation is thus committed to non-neutrality on the excellence of the reasons for the belief explained, it seems to warrant a version of the idea that the belief is held because the fact that things are as it represents them impresses itself on the converging believers. The fact impresses itself by way of

the reasons alluded to: one might ask how else it could do so, if not by way of reasons. And why should we not suppose the idea can be similarly warranted where, as in ethics, the persuasiveness of the reasons by which beliefs are explained falls short of proof? It is the non-neutrality of the explanations, rather than the inexorability of the reasons they appeal to, that matters. The idea of a fact impressing itself on a believer by way of reasons for belief need not require that anyone exposed to those reasons can be guaranteed to be persuaded by them. If the reasons are good ones, anyone exposed to them and not persuaded must be missing something: an explanation of the relevant sort, since it depends on the reasons being good ones, would force notions like that of insensitivity on us for the case of non-ignorant dissenters, and would not obviously stand in need of an independent theory of error (1986; 379)

Thus, when we see that, in the mathematical case, non-neutrality and the efficacy of good reasons go together, we can also see that, in ethical cases,

[t]he cogency of the reasons for belief to which these non-neutral explanations would appeal would not be acknowledged except within an ethical outlook partly characterized by the beliefs explained; so there might seem to be an air of bootstrapping about the idea that one might assure oneself of objectivity on these lines. (*op. cit.*; 380)

Here, we might think, is a case in point of Williams' criteria for objectivity proper: ethics must admit of some bootstrapping, whilst science need not. Now, though, the true problem with Williams' use of the non-perspectival – which I outlined above – comes into clear relief:

[in] affirming the perspective-freedom of scientific concepts, one shows that the correct application of those concepts is simply dictated by the world itself, rather than needing to be judged by standards of reasoning that are not independent of scientific knowledge as it stands, a human construction at a particular juncture in its historical development. This is to picture science as a mode of inquiry in which the facts can directly imprint themselves on our minds, without need of mediation by anything as historically conditioned and open to dispute as canons of good and bad scientific argument. But this picture embodies a philosophical fantasy of truth, and of science as an approach to truth. (*op. cit.*; 380)

Which is to say that the sort of emptiness which constitutes one side of Williams'

dilemma, above, is just as much of a problem for the idea that we can be guided toward the non-perspectival as it was for the idea that we can reach the non-perspectival. And further, it turns out that our paradigm case of objective knowledge – scientific knowledge – is objective in broadly the same sort of way as ethics, viz. in a way which does not depend on anything which is entirely practice independent. So the cognomen 'non-perspectival' is inappropriate.

Once we realise that this is the case – that possessing a notion of objectivity does not require us to have a conception of anything non-perspectival, and in fact relies on the sort of perspective-relative properties which make a reason a good one – we can feed this finding back into our thought about the paradigm case: scientific enquiry. Feeding the thought about the content of ethical objectivity back into thought about our scientific practices allows us to see that in talking of the objective, we cannot be talking of anything practice-independent; rather, we are talking of the accountability which occupying a reasonable role allows. All of which allows that we can hold onto the notion of something independent of any one perspective, but that we need not do so by talking about that something as being intrinsically anormative.

### **3.31 Interlude**

The point so far is this: that the idea of a world already there guiding our practices, if it is anormative, viz. if it is the practice-independent way the world is, is unintelligible: it engenders a scientism which is a version of the myth of the given, or a conception of rules which contain the criteria for their own application. Sacks, in wanting a transcendental constraint to adjudicate transcendental features, makes just this sort of mistake, because the only thing that would necessitate a transcendental constraint is an anormative world which stands in need of the correct interpretation. Such a world is a world externally related to scheme – as we have seen, picturing the world in this way, leads to the problems afflicting transcendental idealism .

To set the scene for the claims of the next chapter I want briefly to follow up the above dialectic by showing a particular way in which one could seem to hold on to the thought expressed by McDowell and yet still tacitly admit a problematic scheme-content picture.

### **3.32 Rorty's Explanation of Why the World is Not Already There in a Way Which Guides Our Practices**

Part of the motivation for Williams' arguments for our conception of the world having to be a conception of an absolute source of objectivity was a dissatisfaction with a family of philosophical pictures exemplified by that espoused by Richard Rorty in such statements as this:

It is less paradoxical . . . to stick to the classic notion of “better describing what was already there” for physics. This is not because of deep epistemological or metaphysical considerations, but simply because, when we tell our Whiggish stories about how our ancestors gradually crawled up the mountain on whose (possibly false) summit we stand, we need to keep some things constant throughout the story.  
(1980; 344–345 )

Williams claimed that Rorty's position is self defeating: it makes claims about the contingency of describing the world as if it is “already there” (1985; 137) but it cannot do so if “it is not going to assume an already existing physical world in which human beings come into existence and develop their cultures” (*ibid*) and further that in denying such a world as Physics describes as 'already there' Rorty is,

...trying to reoccupy the transcendental standpoint outside human speech and activity, which is precisely what he wants us to renounce. (*op. cit.*; 137).

McDowell's rejoinder on Rorty's behalf was that Williams was invoking the myth of the given, because of his

pictur[ing of] science as a mode of inquiry in which the facts can directly imprint themselves on our minds, without need of mediation by anything as historically conditioned and open to dispute as canons of good and bad scientific argument. [Which] embodies a philosophical fantasy of truth, and of science as an approach to truth. The point about causation makes no difference to this: it would be an illusion to suppose that when a body of belief is such as to warrant a causal gloss on the idea of the facts impressing themselves on us, it thereby contrives to prise itself apart from the province



of reason. (1986; 380)

McDowell thus concluded that when confronted with a philosopher who tries to cast off scheme content dichotomies Williams errs by refusing to hear them saying anything except “Even in science, there is no content, only scheme.”(*op. cit.*; 381)

I now want to show that McDowell's criticism of Williams does not vindicate Rorty, for either Rorty does indeed require more of the anormative world than it can give, or he is forced to endorse a scheme-content picture upon which “Even in science, there is no content, only scheme”( *ibid*). Evidently Rorty does not do so explicitly – this is something he explicitly rejects. The claim I want to make is more subtle: it is that the possibility of Rorty's articulation of his claim that there is no world already there relies upon a set of philosophical assumptions which are antithetical to that claim.

In *Pragmatism and Romanticism* Rorty makes this claim,

[T]here is no difference between the thermostat, the dog and the pre-linguistic infant except the differing degrees of complexity of their reactions to environmental stimuli. The brutes and the infants are capable of discriminative responses, but not of acquiring information. For there is no such thing as the acquisition of information until there is a language in which to formulate that information. Information came into the universe when the first hominids began to justify their actions to one another by making assertions and backing up those assertions with further assertions. There is information only where there is inferential justification. (2007; 113)

On such a picture there is the by now familiar assumption that something normatively bereft becomes something normatively imbued only by being set amidst an already extant normative context. Mere sentience becomes sapience when parts of the causal realm are used in practices of justification by a community of language users.

To make sense of how we move from the mere differences in discriminative faculties to differences represented as differences which bear upon one another within an informational structure, Rorty is moved to introduce the Imagination as a faculty which imbues the raw causal data with normativity. Thus, he claims further that,

...the imagination is the source of freedom because it is the source of language. ... It is not that we first spoke a language that simply reported what was going on around us, and later enlarged this language by imaginative re-description. Rather, imaginativeness goes all the way back. The concepts of redness and roundness are as much imaginative creations as those of God, of the positron, and of constitutional democracy. Getting the word 'red' into circulation was on a par with Newton's persuading people to start using the term 'gravity'. For nobody knew what redness was before some early hominids began talking about the differences in colours of things... (*op. cit.*; 114)

That is, the imagination is the means by which parts of the causal order are represented as having salient relationships with one another by agents who can already use a means of representation. If we grant this thought for a moment we can see, through the sort of Steiner-esque move discussed in chapter 2, how such a faculty is thought to work: we take the imagination to be introducing a candidate claim for a particular relation between parts of the causal order through a sort of contentless doing, then pragmatically explain the informational systems that we do end up using as the end-product of a process of natural selection.

I think there is something right in the thought that imagination goes “all the way back” (*ibid*); namely, that there is no hope in looking for a level of concept use at which there is a semantic fixity determined only by the way the world is, and no sense to the idea of providing an ontogenetic account of our capacity to make novel use of concepts. The problem is that pairing this picture with the idea of an opposed anormative realm leaves us with a version of the idea that there is a way in which the world is in itself which we either cannot get to, or which tells us how it is.

What I am intending to say, then, is that Rorty fails in the same way as Steiner's Wittgenstein did: if we wanted to maintain an account such as Rorty's, we would have to make sense of the role of the imagination's propensity to produce norms for non-canonical cases. Whatever fulfilled the role would have to do the job of yielding the initial content needed in order that there can be candidates for a Steiner-esque selection. *Prima facie*, there are, given an anormative/normative distinction, two modes by which to do so: creation and discovery. That is, the faculty must either be – in some

quite radical sense - the source of the content, or it must afford a special ability to model the way things could be; the imagination must either provide rules which are binding prior to their application or the structure of the information provided by the anormative world must guide our normative imaginings.

As I have stressed in relation to various other similar claims, pointing to these undesirable features does not rely upon requiring Rorty's claims about conceptual dependency to provide an ontogenetic account, nor does it involve contesting the claim that a normative context is required for demonstrative definition; rather, it points to an internal incoherence in Rorty's manner of showing that the imagination (construed as providing a normative context) and imaginativeness go all the way back (*ibid*) (in the sense of being conceptually prior to parts of the anormative world becoming intelligible as falling under some particular novel concept).

The idea is simply that the imagination cannot provide us with such a normative context because to make sense of it doing so would require the intelligibility of a picture of mind and world as, respectively, embodying the normative and the anormative, and such a picture creates a demand (in much the same way as Steiner's treatment of Wittgenstein did (cf. 2.54)) for an ontogenetic account of the transition from anormative to normative which could never be given. None of which is to say that if there already is a normative context, it is not useful to describe the extension of such a context by reference to the imagination.

To show more clearly why thinking of the imagination as playing the role of extending our normative context is problematic I now want to attend to the aforementioned split in the ways in which we might conceive the imagination picking out structure from the causal order once it is placed within a normative context. The key problem with both is that the anormative environment must cause us to have beliefs which are then justified, or not, by holding a place within the already normative field of what we do; but for such a picture to work our normative context would have to already apply to the information given by our causal relation to the world, or the causal information would have to be already normatively structured.

On the one hand, if the imagination is a mode of discovery, it requires in us a special

ability to model the way things could be. If this is so an account of how we have the materials with which to do the appropriate sort of modelling is vital. Here, if we are holding tight to the image of the pre- and non-linguistic as dispositional in the merely causal sense, we again have two options. Either we acquire the materials by way of some privileged access to the way things are (which is to beg the question by assuming what the imagination is meant to enable access to, or, at the very least, to render the role of the imagination redundant), or we posit something like the metaphysical isomorphism of the metaphysically-read-*Tractatus* in order to guarantee our command of some possible ways the world could be, with which to construct complexes which we could then test.

On the other hand, if the imagination creates in some sense which does not commit us to a problematic idealism, it must be in a sense which allows for the creation to be made out of the structured information given to us in experience. Thus the question 'how did the hominids ever recognise the relevant differences among colours in the first place?' would have to be answered by saying that the differences were not relevant until we endowed the differences with a role in things that we do. Yet this now seems to collapse into either:

- an incoherent conventionalism upon which differences are not really differences in the world, but *only* in our scheme;
- or the discovery picture, upon which we pick and choose parts of the causal order which already are appropriately related and either show us so, or we have an ability to imagine that they are so prior to any normative engagement with such parts of the empirical world.

In summary, the troubling thought amounts to this: even if the experience elicited by environmental stimuli is the end of a merely causal process, if, for instance, 'red' things were to show up in experience as differentiated from the rest of the environment in such a way as to be picked out as such, there must have been information present in experience sufficient to relate what is presently experienced to an array of other possible experiences, otherwise we could not make sense of the information being placeable within the normative context we provide (this would be an instance of the *modal myth of the given* cf. 1.51). So the relations inherent in the beliefs we are merely

caused to have looks to be already informational in Rorty's richly normative sense: if one has an implicit command of the modal relations one experience bears to others, then one already has at one's disposal the reasons one would give if being held accountable for one's actions.

Thus, at best, Rorty's mode of making sense of the idea of our relation to the world tends towards accepting a disingenuous version of transcendental idealism:<sup>24</sup> a version on which we take the world to be an anormative substance which we can only bring into view in virtue of normative activity, whilst being debarred from any useful notion of either the applicability of the norms which bring the world into view because we cannot get outside of meaningful activity in order to describe them, or the substance itself.

At worst Rorty is claiming both that the world provides us with only anormative information and allowing that that information is present to us in an already normative way. In which case he offends against the myth of the given.

McDowell's rejoinder to Williams on Rorty's behalf was that Williams had erred by refusing to hear those who did not subscribe to the idea of science aiming at absolute objectivity as "saying anything except 'Even in science, there is no content, only scheme'." (1986; 301) In seeing the matter like this, we can make a fortified version of Williams' criticism of Rorty. In either case, Williams' take on Rorty as McDowell scathingly casts it is correct:

- In the best case, for Rorty the role of science is constrained to the description of relations internal to our conceptual sphere, where our conceptual sphere is opposed to the realm of the merely causal.
- In the worst case for Rorty the causal world is infused with an intrinsic normativity that Rorty would like to be available only to concept users.

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<sup>24</sup> Kant actually takes a much more radical view towards causality than Rorty takes up; a view upon which causality is a normative part of our practices. I think Kant is right to do so, and it is thus a mistake to characterise the causal in opposition to the normative, anyway. I bring this out in 5-5.2.

### **3.33 A World Problematically Already There**

We have seen that on Rorty's picture a path is carved between the given and conventionalism only by implicitly invoking an equally mysterious Kantian picture: a picture upon which there is a world which plays no role in our inferential lives apart from a merely causal one. Such a picture requires a notion of an anormative world which is incompatible with the sort of view of the world as made up of intensional objects that we found McGinn's reading of the *Tractatus* to exposit, and it requires such a notion in order to articulate the view of our reference to the world being limited to just those sorts of intensional objects (cf. the quotations of McGinn featured at p.51; p.105). Thus Rorty tacitly retains a scheme-world dualism between norms and the merely empirical world, but collapses scheme-experience dualism and in so doing gives the impression of rejecting scheme-content dualisms (cf. p.30 for my use of the scheme-world/scheme-experience distinction drawn by Child (1994)).

Williams' criticism of Rorty now seems quite sensible: Rorty does indeed privilege scheme at the expense of content, and to do so tacitly requires an illicit 'world already there'.

Rorty's rejoinder would here be, I think, that the criticism I am making both gets him wrong, and worse, does so by pushing beyond the bounds of sense in a way he is trying to warn against. Rorty would claim that his aim is not to show that there is no such thing as objectivity, but rather that there is no conceptual unity to our use of 'objectivity'; that treating our uses as if they are conceptually unified is to impose upon them a generality which can only be gained by abstracting the notions from the concrete circumstances which lend them sense.

Rorty's reply would then be that I have missed this nuance and taken him to be engaged in a substantive dispute with Williams, when there is in fact no substantive dispute to be had, and that there is no substantive dispute is his original point. My objection, however, is not to this meta-philosophical thread in Rorty's thought; rather, the objection is to the expression of that meta-philosophical thread.

My objection is aimed at the incoherence of justifying a picture of a lack of conceptual

unity by appeal to a picture of mind and world as externally related realms of inference and cause in order to show that, there can be no extra-normative determinates of sense (which I agree there cannot be). Thus, my claim is simply that Rorty does not take his metaphilosophical thought sufficiently well to heart. He forwards a metaphysical picture which problematises any relation between norms and the world, and because of this remains in the same philosophical game as Williams and thus vulnerable to Williams' criticisms.

Furthermore, Williams justly criticised Rorty's position: it does rely upon illicit theorising about the relation between mind and world. Generalising an objection of the form of Williams' to Rorty will be the purpose of the next chapter; showing that if one gets involved in the project of explaining why concepts like 'objectivity' have no unity by describing norms and the world as modally free relata, then one buys back into the very problematic one is seeking to avoid.

### **3.4 Some Links to the Next Chapter**

If we attend to the notion of grammar being used in the following long section of *Philosophical Investigations* (496-500), we find a very different sort of notion of the relation of normativity to the world to that which Rorty espouses. A notion which has no space for an external relation between norms and the parts of the world to which they apply, and that has no such space for the sorts of reasons which were brought out in opposition to Steiner's views of grammar. Grammar is related to a particular notion of arbitrariness: an idea of the world and language already affording us a normative structure which we can take or leave.

Grammar does not tell us how language must be constructed in order to fulfil its purpose, in order to have such-and-such an effect on human beings. It only describes and in no way explains the use of signs.

The rules of grammar may be called "arbitrary", if that is to mean that the *aim* of the grammar is nothing but that of the language. If someone says "If our language had not this grammar, it could not express these facts"—it should be asked what "*could*" means here.

When I say that the orders "Bring me sugar" and "Bring me milk" make sense, but not the combination "Milk me sugar", that does not mean that the utterance of this combination of words has no effect. And if its effect is that the other person stares at me

and gapes, I don't on that account call it the order to stare and gape, even if that was precisely the effect that I wanted to produce.

To say "This combination of words makes no sense" excludes it from the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language. But when one draws a boundary it may be for various kinds of reason. If I surround an area with a fence or a line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be part of a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary; or it may shew where the property of one man ends and that of another begins; and so on. So if I draw a boundary line that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for.

When a sentence is called senseless, it is not as it were its sense that is senseless. But a combination of words is being excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation.

To appreciate the difference between Wittgenstein's position and the positions of those like Rorty, we need to ask how description is being opposed to explanation in PI 496. One way of opposing explanation and description is this: to describe is adequately to represent a state of affairs, to explain is to give some species of reason why things are or are not, or could or could not be, or should or should not be.

This, however, is not a sharp distinction: such descriptions as feature in the above characterisation can sometimes serve equally well as explanations, and explanations can sometimes be the best way to describe a state of affairs. For instance, if asked how I navigated a strong current of the river Trent using only a coracle and a stick, it is hard to imagine a better explanation than a rich description of the techniques I deployed in order to do so; likewise if my audience still failed to see how this made my survival possible an explanation of how the techniques I deployed helped would serve only to better represent the states of affairs I encountered.

I am not pointing to this bluntness of this distinction between explanation and description in order to point at a problem; rather, I am pointing to these uses of description and explanation in order to show that they are not Wittgenstein's. For description in the sense in which it is interchangeable with explanation, is hypothetical – possibly true or possibly false – and Wittgenstein is quite clear that,

There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our



language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in spite of* an urge to misunderstand them. (PI 109)

I will leave further explicating the issues surrounding why there should be nothing hypothetical in philosophy, and the impulse behind the urge to misunderstand, until the next chapter. Presently, I just want to bring out the sense of 'description' which Wittgenstein is operating with here. I am doing so because clarifying Wittgenstein's notion here is going to be of great help to making perspicuous how to think of objects playing a role in our grammar.

How, then, are there descriptions which are not statements which could be true or false? Kuusela points to a difference in the use of the word 'description' present when we are using rules to do the describing,

I may define a unit of measurement, let us call it a "unit," by picking up a stick from the ground and saying, "this is one unit long." By doing this I am stating a rule that determines what it is to be one unit long and defining this particular stick as a standard of the length of one unit. However, it is important to note that with this definition I am not giving a correct or incorrect description or making a true/false statement about anything, in particular the length of the stick. This comes to light in that had I picked up another stick with a different length and defined it as one "unit," I would *not* have made a mistake or said something false but merely defined "unit" differently. (2008; 113)

The idea coming to the fore here is one that I introduced at the end of the last chapter (2.5-2.6), and will make much much of in the next chapter; it is that when we describe a way of going on by using a rule to *stipulate* what counts as going on in a certain way, 'description' is here being used in the same sort of way as when “defining rules for a calculus, or stating rules that constitute a calculus, I describe a system for the use of signs” or when “stating rules for a game, I describe a game.” (Kuusela 2008; 115). Such descriptions, in the same way as the description of the 'unit', above, are not being used to make truth-apt statements.<sup>25</sup> They are selections of criteria made from an already established logical space – not comparisons to such sections.

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<sup>25</sup> At least not in the context in which they are being used to describe a way of going on; matters are however sensitive in this area and require more careful treatment (cf. 4.23-4.3).

The point I am bringing out here is that the rules being given by such stipulative descriptions are descriptive inasmuch as they are constitutive of a way of doing things – of particular language games –, or constitutive of a model of a way of doing things, and that attending to this sort of distinction affords a way to distinguish between a sense of description which is truth-apt and a sense of description which is not. Further, such descriptions serve to outline practices within which truth-apt judgements make sense.

We can further elaborate upon the last paragraph by relating it to internal and external relations. When the metre stick is chosen as a standard, and the activity one might do with it is described by way of a demonstration, a strong internal relation is established between this description and its object. It is a strong internal relation inasmuch as “what is described does not exist independently of the description” that is, here, that the object 'the metre stick' only exists *as a metre stick*, and can only be identified as such and feature in truth-apt descriptions of it insofar as we are in accordance with the rule we used it to inaugurate.

Returning now to the paragraph I quoted earlier (1.1; p. 16), I now want to add to the claim I made there that examining this difference in uses of ‘description’, then, further elucidates the sense in which Wittgenstein,

...should like to say, if there were only an external connection no connection could be described at all, since we only describe the external connection by means of the internal one. If this is lacking, we lose the footing we need for describing anything at all – just as we can't shift anything with our hands unless our feet are planted firmly. (PR 66)

Such elucidation requires, as I have stressed in relation to Rorty, a sense of ‘internal connection’ which does not equate internal connections with normative connections if normative connections are thought of as being - in opposition to causal connections - *merely* conceptual (*qua* part of a normative scheme which is externally related to the empirical world). For such a picture has built into it a scheme-content dichotomy: there is a world of anormative stuff which is structured by, or has its structure reflected by, concepts which are articulable by way of internal-*qua*-*merely*-conceptual connections. My claim is that this is a move that ought not be allowed sense: the ultimate

requirement of such a picture is that the internal connections consist in either the empirically groundless conventions of the describers, or in a relation to some intangibly transcendental essence. Either way, a pernicious scheme-content dichotomy is instantiated.

The sense of an 'internal connection' which is required, then, is one upon which internal connections represent an unproblematic relation to an already normatively structured bedrock which we and the world embody together: our feet are firmly planted inasmuch as there is no possibility of going deeper, but the fixity of our feet in no way dictates an essential way of using concepts. In explicating the firmness of ones feet, then, I think we are likewise explicating a way of language use being arbitrary which avoids both relativism and the transcendence of the Kantian picture.

### **3.41 A Link back to Chapter 2 and on to Chapter 4: Arbitrariness and Criteria**

It is worth reminding ourselves here that the aim of the thesis is to find a way to allay the urge to explain how normative force and normative authority relate. The effort to meet this aim is bipartite:

- First, showing that either explaining the relation between norms and the empirical world in the manner of the *transcendental idealist*, or explaining why there is no need to explain such a relation by adjusting the *transcendental idealist* picture (as Rorty did (cf. 3.33)), is self undermining.
- Secondly, showing that we have to make no such explanations or modifications of explanations if we allow: that the world already has a normative structure; that accountability is always internal to logical spaces; and, that novel uses of that structure do not stand in need of criteria for correctness. (And that these claims all come together).

In this chapter I have been unpacking the first part by showing how different efforts to move away from the Kantian picture merely serve to reinstate its problems. Opposing the later Wittgenstein's idea of grammar to the sorts of pictures of our systems of norms which we have seen in this chapter – systems of norms which could not relate to the world unproblematically because of the structural features they share with the transcendental idealist – makes a start towards filling out the constituents of the second

of the above parts, and also of relating the two parts.

The distinction between the two senses of 'description' I have been outlining affords us a different way of thinking of arbitrariness to that of Rorty and Sacks; it also affords us a way of thinking of the prerequisites of sense such that they are not determinate or ineffable. The distinction affords these ways of thinking because through stipulative description an already normative item is taken up for a different use (so there is no movement from the anormative to the normative), and, crucially, there is no criteria for correctness for which items we choose to take up or how we take them up (so there is nothing predetermined).

We can see this different conception in Wittgenstein's 'milk me sugar' example, which is given straight after the remarks about description and arbitrariness which are quoted at the beginning of the previous section:

When I say that the orders "Bring me sugar" and "Bring me milk" make sense, but not the combination "Milk me sugar", that does not mean that the utterance of this combination of words has no effect. And if its effect is that the other person stares at me and gapes, I don't on that account call it the order to stare and gape, even if that was precisely the effect that I wanted to produce. (PI 498)

One point here is that the reaction elicited by "milk me sugar" may well serve as the basis for a novel and useful part of language – we can, for instance, imagine it being exclaimed to lament the ills of an addiction to putting too much sugar in one's tea milking the life out of one; or we can imagine the confusion it invokes being used as part of a lesson in grammar. This is not, though, in the manner of Rorty, to bring something anormative into the sphere of reasons (which is not to say that Rorty would not endorse this open-ended feature of language, it is just to say he is not seeing its significance aright), for whatever reaction is elicited by the novel phrase is parasitic upon there already being an established use, and that use already having a place within a particular empirical and normative practice.

Saying "milk me sugar" is then, in the manner expressed in PI 498, not *necessarily* senseless; rather, if it is senseless it is so because its possibility is currently excluded,

and to bring it into circulation would be to use the pre-existing modes of use to do something new with language. Issues arise here which will usefully be followed through in the next chapter.

#### **Chapter 4: The Problem With Either Explaining, or Explaining Why One Cannot Explain, the Relation Between Normative Force and Normative Authority**

We have seen a motivating purpose for the Kantian transcendental idealist picture to be the justification of the thought that the empirical world as *internally related* to our conceptual scheme: the existence of our categorical concepts is taken to be an essential prerequisite of there being things to experience and speak of.

In the the previous chapter, I rehearsed this now familiar point: the transcendental idealist project ultimately “falls foul of its own strictures” (Glock 1997; 296). The overarching purpose of showing this was to provide a way to start talking about the inescapability of variants of this particular problem for the transcendental idealist's extended family (this extended family being comprised of philosophers who continue to illicitly draw bounds to sense in one way and another (for a brief summary cf. Introduction, 1.31-1.33)). The problem is inescapable because a common feature the members of this family share is that of a conception of the relation between norms and the empirical world which allows a problematic degree of modal freedom (I have so far situated Rorty, Steiner, and Sacks in this family).

The particular way transcendental idealism thus conceived “falls foul of its own strictures” (*ibid*) is that the picture of mind and world required in order to articulate the idea of mind constraining, or organizing, what we can take the world to be, in turn requires acceptance of the very sort of relation which it was the *raison d'être* of this picture to avoid. At the deepest level of the Kantian picture is an external *relation* between some unconceptualised stuff – *substance* - and the means of its conceptualisation – *the categories* (cf. 5-5.2). Description of such a relation commits one to thinking of the existence of unconceptualised stuff, and the existence of the prerequisites of bringing this stuff into view – the categories and substance – as intelligible independently of one another (cf. 1.31-1.33 ). Such thoughts are, however, empty: the sense of such thoughts is unaccountable for by recourse to the sort of internal relation which it was hoped would allow us to make sense of how our norms connect with their criteria. There is, then, a clear sense in which, so conceived, the antithesis of Kant's schema plays an essential role in its thesis.

We can add further articulation to the problem in question by describing the Kantian transcendental idealist's move as a sort of gerrymandering which shifts the domain of the intentional objects which we wish to account for our ability to talk of. A problem is (or problems are) caused by a picture of mind and substance as externally related. The transcendental idealist solution is to posit that the external relation of mind and world produces an internal relation. On such a picture, the form of the empirical world is the product of the categories constraining, or organizing, substance, thus the form of the empirical world depends upon whatever does the constraining or organising. Through this manoeuvre, the target of intentionality is shifted from substance to the transcendently ideal, yet empirically real, *empirical world*. (We will pay closer attention to this move in chapter 5).

An important point in the dialectic summarised above, which will now motivate this chapter, is that although Kant's problem was *prima facie* a metaphysical one, this appearance was only one particular guise of a deeper problem. My strategy has been to get to grips with such problems through attention to the relatively similar problems faced by the early Wittgenstein. That there is a deeper problem at play becomes apparent if we once again turn our attention to the difference between the *metaphysical* and the *elucidatory* readings of the *Tractatus*. For, although, on an elucidatory reading, it was possible to re-conceive the *Tractatus* as making no claim about anything but language use and its logical prerequisites, a prerequisite of telling the elucidatory story was a commitment to the “crystalline purity of Logic” (PI 107-108)<sup>26</sup> – viz. to language language possessing a particular essence – it turned out this was merely to replace talk of one sort of prerequisite which cannot be talked of intelligibly with another prerequisite afflicted by the same problem.

The problem which I am claiming to be manifest under different guises can now be put into the form of a dilemma. If we attempt to secure an internal relation between normative force and normative authority by explaining how they are so related, then we either, on the one hand, we presume a further external relation or weak internal relation in order to explain the relation between grammar and the world, and in so doing merely push back the problem at hand; or, on the other hand, we presume a

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<sup>26</sup> Wittgenstein uses this phrase to refer to the picture of sense as essentially determinate which is operative in the *Tractatus*.

deeper internal relation of the same kind as we are interested in establishing, in order to underwrite the relation between grammar and the world, and in so doing render the transcendental move superfluous.

The above dilemma, I want to suggest, is a pernicious methodological trap: accounts which seem to give us an explanation of how they have excised external explanations of mind and world, are in fact buying back into the same problematic under a deeper guise or leaving it untouched.

Once we have clarified this problem, then, we need to turn to how to avoid this trap. It may seem like adopting an extreme quietism is the only option left, because making any claim regarding the relation between norms and their empirical criteria, even the claim that the two cannot be modally free of one another, requires talking of norms and the world as independently intelligible things.<sup>27</sup>

I intend to argue that extreme quietism is not the only option. The sort of view expressed in the previous paragraph depends upon retaining parts of the transcendental idealist picture according to which the prerequisites of sense are determinate and so *ineffable*, and also *intrinsically normative*.

We can, then, make a methodological shift which frees us of being trapped between senselessness and silence by following the later Wittgenstein in a thoroughgoing rejection of the determinacy of sense whilst retaining a form of the saying/showing distinction which is present in the *Tractatus*. Doing so enables us to escape the clutches of transcendental idealism without justifying doing so with a further metaphysical picture.

In making the move away from determinacy we will see that all the explaining we need to do with regard to what something means is to give a description of its normative context (of the logical space which it inhabits). Considering such descriptions shows that any explanations which appeal to some determinate beyond such a logical space, or anything intrinsically normative (something within that logical

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. The criticism Williams made of Rorty (3.2-3.33), also Cassam (1986) clearly expresses this view.



space which is determinate despite any relations within that space), are *superfluous* in the same manner as for the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*,

‘Laws of inference’, which are supposed to justify inferences, as in the works of Frege and Russell, have no sense, and would be superfluous. (TLP 5.132)

The thought here (which will be expanded upon in 4.11-4.3) is that substantive logical relations are superfluous if reified into things externally related to propositions because a prerequisite of the possibility of any one proposition is its internal relation to all other propositions, and the laws of inference are already expressed by these internal relations; that is, logical relations are *shown* by internal relations.

What undermined this claim of Wittgenstein's, as we saw in the last chapter, was the substantive basis he invoked in order to show that there must be one unified set of simples and thus, one logical space constituted by internal relations between simples – the determinate form of language.

The challenge of this chapter, then, is to show that we can retain the idea of a logical space, and the thought that there is no need to appeal to anything external to a particular logical space, in order to describe the accountability of normative role players within that space to each other. Furthermore, a further challenge is to show we can do so without committing ourselves to dogmatic claims about the prerequisites of sense. I will suggest that in order to meet these aims we must put models of what we do with language created by stipulating their substantive prerequisites to work in order to talk about how we do use concepts (cf. 4.3).

Further, I will suggest that it is because one must use seemingly substantive language games to discuss relations of accountability within a logical space that one is easily fooled into thinking that one has principled reasons for eschewing external explanation – that one has identified a level of meaning at which things simply display their intrinsic normative status. In being seduced into such a thought – that there is a level at which normative relations are determinate and require no interpretation – one reinstates a scheme-content dichotomy in the same way as the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* did. It is herein that the perniciousness of scheme-content dichotomies lies.

Thus, in sum, I want to make a distinction between two ways of proceeding. We will henceforth call philosophical pictures which straight forwardly talk of norms and the world as independently intelligible things *external explanations*, and distinguish the following two responses to external explanations:

- Eschewing external explanation upon principled grounds.
- Eschewing the idea that we can provide principled grounds for eschewing external explanation;<sup>28</sup> and avoiding external explanation by showing its problematic nature by using seemingly substantive languages.

I want to show the first method to be self undermining. The manner I adopt of showing the first method to be self undermining will serve, in turn, as an example of the second method.

I will term the practice of deploying seemingly substantive languages a *mythological method*. I name it so because to use such seemingly substantive languages one must treat a particular logical space as if it is intrinsically normative in a *sui generis* way; that is one must act *as if* one is accepting into one's account instances of the *myth of the Given*.

Thus the name 'mythological method' is intended as a mnemonic; a way of keeping present to mind that such languages only *seem* to be substantive because they are stipulated into existence in order to model our use of concepts. (A mnemonic to help us to avoid the circle of confusions sketched on p.11).

#### **4.1 An Example: Diamond's Treatment of Kripke**

An example of the sort of strategy I characterised above can be found in the background argument to Cora Diamond's recent criticism of Kripke's view of the nature of the normative authorities which enable practices like measurement. Diamond summarises the import of her argument as follows:

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<sup>28</sup> And doing so because any such explanation reinstates an analogue of the problem with external explanation in the manner which looked to lead to quietism, (cf. above).

If [...] we suggest, as Kripke does, that how long something is is determined, not by comparison with the rod in Paris, but by comparison with the length which it had at a particular time, it is now much less clear what language game is being played. How am I to compare some objects I now want to measure with the length the rod in Paris had 5 years ago? My point is not that there is no way to answer the question [...] The point is rather that [...] talk of a length used as a standard [...] hangs in the air unless there is some context, either one that actually exists or one we can imagine, in which we can see what it is to count as making comparisons with the standard length. (Diamond 2001; 105)

The thought here is that without a normative context, a standard of measurement cannot exert the normative force which would allow us to make sense of it playing the role of a normative authority. The argument for Kripke's criterion for metrehood being unable to exert normative force targets an underlying assumption, or way of construing the object of investigation, which is structuring Kripke's investigation in such a way as to render the object of investigation radically out of touch with the normative context (or practice) which allows it intelligibility.

The assumption of Kripke's which is in question is that of a clear division between facts about meaning and facts about what we do with meaning, or, more generally, a clear division of facts pertaining to meaning in metaphysical and epistemological domains. Making this assumption compels one to think that the object of investigation – here, our concept of a metre – must be a normative authority which is externally related or weakly internally related to the normative contexts within which we use it. Making sense of such a relation requires that the normative authority is intelligible as such a potential normative authority independently of its occupation of a place within a normative context. If we take this last thought to be obviously true, we are in a position where the normative force of the normative authority within the normative context needs to be accounted for theoretically, and the independent intelligibility of the normative authority to us needs to be accounted for also.

If one loses sight of this motivation and takes Diamond to be engaging with Kripke upon grounds internal to such a philosophical picture as he assumes, it will seem

obviously right to think that there is no difference between Diamond and Kripke's thought which is neither a matter of comparing the relative merits of two *theories of meaning*, or merely verbal.

What might seduce one into thinking that the dispute between Kripke and Diamond is upon common ground is that it seems that Kripke can maintain, with Diamond, that the idea of length does indeed depend upon there being a practice of measurement, whilst only differing in opinion about the theoretical description of how the normative authority for a particular concept has come to exert normative force upon applications of, or tools for the application of, this concept, within such a practice.

What I want to elaborate throughout this chapter, then, is that Kripke can maintain that the idea of length depends upon there being a practice of measurement, but only in a deeply different way to Diamond. This will depend on two core points.

- First, Diamond is striving to bring out a sense of dependence which falls out of there being no clear distinction between facts of meaning and what we do with facts of meaning. For Diamond it is a prerequisite of the possibility of measurement that the ongoing material *practice* of performing a particular sort of measurement and the *concept* of that particular sort of measurement are internally related. It is a prerequisite because if there were not this internal relation, we would have to provide some criteria external to the system of measurement which ensures all of the measurements within such a system are responsible to each other, and, as we have seen, once we picture meaning in this way we meet with the sorts of problems which have been the subject of this thesis so far (for a summary cf. 1.31-1.33).
- Secondly, the sense of dependence Kripke trades upon requires a clear distinction between what we *do* with facts of meaning, and facts of meaning already being in place. Kripke maintains that, once set by our practices, there is a determinate fact of meaning concerning what a metre is which is intelligible independently of how we go on to use the notion of a metre. Kripke dogmatically presumes that sense being given to a determinate criterion of correctness for the attribution of metre-hood is contingently dependent upon our practices for its existence, but, once

existent, metaphysically independent of our normative practices. The tell-tale sign of this is that Kripke's criteria of correctness for concepts are intrinsically normative; they can reflexively exert normative force upon themselves.

In this manner Kripke does a disservice to the force of the rule-following considerations (cf 1.32): he bypasses rule-following problems, or at the very least least makes their problematic indeterminacy appear merely epistemological (in making it seem like it is just a problem about how we do in fact know about whatever stands as a normative authority in a given normative context), by smuggling in a philosophical picture upon which it must be the case that the facts of meaning are, once set, determinate.

To bring out the difference between Kripke and Diamond's approach I will show why Kripke is not entitled to the sort of distinction between facts of meaning and facts about what we do with meaning that he requires. To do so I will draw on the way of reading the later Wittgenstein – namely, that offering a substantive solution to the same problem as Kant faced was *not his project*, which I sketched at the end of the last chapter. Wittgenstein, rather than engaging in the Kantian project, sought to resist the philosophical picture which motivated the Kantian problematic – a picture of the realm of the conceptual and the world to which it applies as bearing an internal relation to one another but only because of a prior external, or weakly internal, relation – by showing that there is no sense to thinking of concepts which are not embodied in an empirical situation.

Diamond, then, claims that the way Kripke is conceiving of a key part of any description or explanation of measurement (a standard of length) renders that standard of length *superfluous* in regard to the practice of actual measurement (in the sense of 'superfluous' I drew from the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, above). The *superfluity* of the standard of length is missed because Kripke is taking for granted a philosophical picture upon which “a standard length can be defined completely in advance and independently of our engaging in some activity of carrying out comparisons of lengths” (Diamond 2001; 105); that is, a notion of length in conflict with the picture of the embeddedness of concepts within empirical situations we find in the later Wittgenstein's work.

Shortly, then, I will make much more of Kripke's sharp distinction between metaphysics and epistemology. We first, though, need to be more particular about how and why the word 'superfluous' ought to be used, so that we might be more clear about how the notion of *superfluity* connects to the faulty view of concepts which is at the centre of the criticisms which Diamond aims at Kripke.

#### **4.11 Superfluity and Super-Pictures**

The idea of *superfluity* is clearly an important one, so I will take some time to unpack it. For a neat illustration of *superfluity* consider this passage from David Egans' *Pictures in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy*:

Mental pictures can be as clear and unambiguous as the pictures that we encounter outside our heads, but no more: the aspiration for a super-picture is not just that it be clear enough for all practical purposes, but that it be superlatively clear, with no room for doubt or variance.

At PI §139, Wittgenstein asks how a mental picture of a cube might reflect an understanding of the word "cube." Cubes are prisms, so a picture of a cube is equally a picture of a prism: the same picture could equally well be projected so that it connects with the word "prism." At best, Wittgenstein says, the picture of a cube did "suggest a certain use to us" – suggest that we associate the picture with the word "cube" – "but it was also possible for me to use it differently." For the picture not only to suggest a particular use but to compel it, we want the picture to contain instructions for its own application. But any such instructions must be applied along with the picture that contains them, so they cannot be the link that joins the picture to its application. (2011; 59-60)

The above passage describes our want to find '*super-pictures*'<sup>29</sup> – pictures which leave us no room for misinterpretation – in order to put an end to the need for an explanation. We are tempted to introduce super-pictures to settle what the facts of meaning are when it seems that, from our point of view, many facts of meaning could

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<sup>29</sup> The term 'super-picture' is used by Wittgenstein in his *Lectures on Religious Belief* (c.1938) to describe the idea of mental pictures which need no 'method of projection' to be understood; that is they do not need to be, in the manner of a normal picture, connected with an application in order to be understood as a picture. In what follows I use the term in a more general way: to describe anything which is intrinsically normative and intimates to us that it is so.

fit a state of affairs equally well.

The idea of a super-picture is, then, that of a picture which is intrinsically meaningful in an unambiguous way: there is a determinate fact of meaning concerning what it pictures. Furthermore, the super-picture intimates this determinate fact to us. Part of the point of Wittgenstein's consideration of super-pictures is, I take it, to show one that they are superfluous to any explanation of concept application because the very idea of a super-picture is the idea of a picture disconnected from an appropriate normative context. In a wider philosophical frame, Wittgenstein's considerations show that structuring an investigation around identification of the essential qualities of such superfluous entities is pernicious inasmuch as it is bound to lead one to make empty explanations.

Super-pictures are *superfluous* because they are imbued with the capacity to intimate their normative significance to us, and such a property is useless (aside from being incoherent in the same way as instances of the myth of the Given are). For, all that is useful about such pictures is already embodied in the normative relations they, as normal pictures, would bear to our practices and other things within our practices. This uselessness is a *superfluity*, then, because of the double articulation of the normative significance of such pictures: the normative significance is displayed by the picture holding a place within a normative context, and it is also thought to be, in some way, a property of the picture itself. In this way, one might come to think that things like pictures could be things like pictures independently of their use within a practice of picturing; one might then come to think of the normative significance of the picture as a *reflexive* property.

The idea of a super-picture can be used in the following dilemma which sums up the import of the thesis so far. If we think of meaningful things as being meaningful in virtue of an external, or weakly internal, relation between scheme and content we are either on the one hand, committed to there being a level of content which is anormative and thus end up imbuing our ways of going on with the problematic powers of the Kantian categories (i.e. we privilege normative force), or on the other hand, we take things to be intrinsically normative (i.e. to offer us an absolute source of normative authority), in the sense that that thing is to be interpreted in a particular way and tells

us so. On this second horn we are thus left with super-pictures (which are superfluous).

We find this idea of the normative inertness of theoretical entities which exhibit this sort of *superfluity* further developed at PI 374:

The great difficulty here is not to represent the matter as if there were something one couldn't do. As if there really were an object, from which I derive its description, but I were unable to shew it to anyone.

This quote comes from Wittgenstein's treatment of private languages. The point in context is that one ought not treat sensations as radically private objects which can still, despite their being hidden from public view, somehow serve as normative authorities for descriptions of our inner lives. One ought not because sensations thus conceived are both necessarily removed from the normative context which allows something to exert normative force (this is the sense in which they are radically private), and are required to serve as a normative authority and so exert normative force.

The thought that any concept of sensation is incoherent if it is a concept of something radically private has a straight-forward external analogue: an idea of things-as-they-are-in-themselves is incoherent if these are things which are both radically inaccessible and yet still set the standard of correctness for our outward ostendings. For, such a picture rests upon this analogous mistake: allowing that something which is incapable of exerting normative force can be an ultimate source of normative authority.

In making the above more general application of the form of the private language concerns clearer, then, I also want to make clearer that Wittgenstein does not want to, and does not have to, paint a picture upon which, if we were not limited by the resources we have with which to bring the world into view (our conceptual scheme), we could reveal the sorts of things which, upon a Kantian schema, we cannot (namely, things as they are in themselves).

We can avoid assimilating Wittgenstein's method of dealing with such concerns to Kant's method – and so maintain the usefulness of Wittgenstein's thought to meeting



the aims of the thesis – by understanding that central to the private language argument is that private mental entities, such as sensations, cannot be sources of normative authority because of something like the following thought:

The concept of sensation is defined by our ordinary technique for talking about sensations, and, if we are to be justified in calling 'S' a concept of sensation, it needs to be shown that 'S' constitutes a technique of this kind. It is not enough that the private linguist assures us, on the basis of his act of introspection, that he is naming a sensation, for being a name of a sensation means being a concept of a certain kind, i.e. having a particular use or grammar. It is only by showing that 'S' has the characteristic use of a sensation concept that we could justify calling 'S' the name of a sensation. But given that the private linguist sets up the connection between name and object simply by turning his attention inwards and saying 'S', there can be no question of justifying the claim that 'S' names a sensation by reference to its possessing the distinctive use that characterizes our concepts of sensation. For it is part of the description of the example that 'S' does not connect with our established techniques for talking about sensations. (McGinn 1997; 132)

That is, the sensation cannot be a normative authority, but not simply because there is no way to verify that, whatever the criterion for application of a concept is, it is the same over time, nor because of any other sense in which an external check upon it having an accessible criterion of identity happens to be lacking. Rather it cannot be a normative authority because sensations, thus conceived, are not the sort of thing which *could* exert normative force. They could not exert normative force because “there can be no question of justifying the claim that 'S' names a sensation by reference to its possessing the distinctive use that characterizes our concepts of sensation” since “it is part of the description of the example that 'S' does not connect with our established techniques for talking about sensations.” (*ibid*). The point is that the criterion qua private sensation cannot be checked, but this obstacle is no contingency (such as each of us possessing a private epistemological realm would be). Rather, under such a description the criterion thus conceived is, inasmuch as it “is part of the description” (*ibid*) that sensations are radically disconnected from the realm of normative force, essentially uncheckable.

In summary, then, the particular problem with sensations conceived of as essentially

inner and only contingently correlated to worldly phenomena is that sensations thus conceived could not be a candidate for serving as a criterion in the first place. They could not because, thus conceived, they are, when considered in isolation, normatively inert and so superfluous to explanation.

The problem here is not that 'S' refers to something that is (can be) introspected, but that the private linguist tries to determine what 'S' refers to by a bare act of introspection, i.e. by 'concentrat[ing] my attention on the sensation—and so, as it were, point[ing] to it inwardly' (*PI* 258). (McGinn 1997; 131)

#### **4.12 Differentiating *Ways of Going On* and *Bedrock* from Conventions and Super-pictures**

I have been taking on some phraseology developed by Wittgenstein. I will now take on some more: his use of '*ways of going on*' and '*bedrock*'.<sup>30</sup> Being clear about how, and why, I am using such phraseology of Wittgenstein's will help us to be clear about how I intend to meet the aims I set out in the introduction; namely, avoiding the problems the transcendental idealist responds to without re-instantiating those very problems.

Wittgenstein uses such phrases to picture what we are doing when we use, and talk about, parts of language and things we do which, in some particular contexts, it makes no sense to treat as being correct or incorrect because, in those contexts, they support the possibility of such judgements. Making sense of such phraseology of Wittgenstein's, then, will, if possible, help us to make sense of, and of how *we* can talk of, the sorts of relations between the notions of arbitrariness, autonomy, justification, and internal relations which I sketched at 2.4-2.6. So, to be clear, we are not engaging in exegetical matters here for their own sake, but rather, in order to maintain and display the usefulness of such uses of these phrases in helping us to avoid the transcendental idealist picture.

I have just been criticising the view that things can be intrinsically normative in a determinate way; and, as part of the dilemma detailed above (p.142), I paired this view

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<sup>30</sup> For *ways of going on* cf. n.19 . I have not yet used '*bedrock*' as Wittgenstein's term of art but I now will. The term '*bedrock*' appears in *PI* 217 as designating the place in a series of justifications which, when reached, does not stand in need of further justification.

with the sort of view we found in Rorty (3.32-3.33): that *our practices* bring normativity to the anormative world. The broader frame within which these criticisms fall includes an explication of the ills of any project which seeks to explain how normativity features in our lives by attributing the possibility of the exertion of normative force to the existence of some particular (or, as I have been metaphorically putting it, to an added ingredient). Both sides of the aforementioned dilemma constitute ways of thinking of normativity arising in situations which are anormative by way of adding some ingredient; this way of thinking, in the way drawn out in chapters 1 and 2, and in the precious section, disconnects normative authority and normative force.

As a precursor to appreciation of the depth of Diamond's criticism of Kripke, I now want to carve out a way of using terms like *ways of going on*, and *bedrock* by making clear that using them in the way I advise does not place one within the above dilemma (p.142). To do so, given my contention that normativity is not an 'added ingredient', I evidently need to avoid interpreting these terms in either of these ways:

- '*Ways of going on*' is a term which designates a way of acting which makes stuff, which would otherwise be anormative, normative.
- '*Bedrock*' is a term used to designate a level of intrinsic normativity.

Such a position as I endorse, however, also needs to be carefully delineated from the erroneous thought that, because it makes no sense to talk of norms as if they were underwritten by a relation to an intrinsically normative substantive or underwritten only by an appeal to what we do, we ought not to talk of bedrock levels of normativity, or basic ways of going on, at all.

To allow us to avoid both of the forgoing pitfalls we must not treat terms such as 'way of going on' and 'bedrock' as only playing a useful role within our talk of what we do with language if they serve to point towards some particular which would feature in an *explanation* of the connection between normative force and normative authority (that is to norms which provide their own criteria for application or to intrinsically normative parts of the world, respectively), and ultimately useless if they do not function in this way.

What is to be established, then, is that because *ways of going on* articulate normative contexts – contexts which include the objects in question rather than themselves providing a way of getting into touch with anormative objects – and *bedrock* articulates a level of normativity within a normative context for which there is no further explanation to give – appeals to *ways of going on*, or *bedrock*, are, in the same sense as Kuusela's stipulative descriptions (3.34-3.341), not up for assessment in terms of truth or falsity.<sup>31</sup>

#### **4.13 Not a Something, But Not A Nothing Either**

We have just reminded ourselves that one could, then, easily divest the terms *way of going on* and *bedrock* of their usefulness by taking them to represent, respectively, rules which are intelligible as such prior to their application, and a level of normativity which is intrinsically so in a determinate way. The point I will develop now is that the usefulness of the phraseology of Wittgenstein's I am taking on can also be mitigated if we take Wittgenstein to be using such phrases only to demonstrate that these phrases are, so used, useful *only* inasmuch as using them so serves to *show* that they do not refer to anything. This point bears direct relevance to my aims. If such phrases serve *only to show that they do not refer to anything*, then they do not provide a way to make sense of talk of what is criterial to a logical space, or to make sense of such talk illustrating that what is criterial to a logical space is unaccountable to its normative prerequisites (cf. 2.5-2.6).

Read's *Throwing Away the Bedrock* (2005) is an example of the sort of mitigation of the usefulness of Wittgenstein's phraseology which I described, above. He maintains a tacit commitment to treating '*ways of going on*', or '*bedrock*' or whatever term plays an analogous role, as referring (supposing they refer *at all*) to rules intelligible prior to their application, or, respectively, to an essentially determinate normative authority. He maintains this tacit view inasmuch as he thinks that if '*ways of going on*', or '*bedrock*' do not so refer, then they, ultimately, have no use at all.

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<sup>31</sup> Egan puts an analogous point nicely point nicely; that, for Wittgenstein, the most basic ways in which we picture the world “are not stand-ins for a more direct, literal expression of the same thing but are rather the most direct way of expressing what it is they express”. (2011; p68)

Read claims that if we take Wittgenstein's use of terms like '*bedrock*' in any other way than a way which is aimed at self-consciously undermining itself in order to show the folly of talking in such a way as instantiates the confusions I bullet-pointed above, we are readmitting the problems of the metaphysically-read-*Tractatus* by merely making

...gnomic gesture[s] toward the aspects of human life which, strictly speaking, cannot be said, as part of the background which we can foreground only by violating the limits of language" (Read 2005; 89)

For instance,

...when we do say 'this is simply what we do' we must be aware that the whole point is that there is no spelling out of the 'this'. Any further spelling out would indicate that we had not in fact reached bedrock. (*Ibid*; 86)

So saying 'this is simply what we do' would be empty, on Read's reading of Wittgenstein, because, as we saw with the act of naming in Chapter 1, and the content of demonstratives in Chapter 2, any spelling out of the 'this' would require another layer of normative context (more things we do), of which explication would, in turn, cause the same problem, thus undermining the claim that we have reached *bedrock* – that there is nowhere to go in producing further explanation.

The bottomless regress of normative contexts is, then, for Read, a fact about our conceptual lives which Wittgenstein tries to show us: committing to a picture where normative contexts bottom out represents a tacit commitment to a picture which again has a place for external explanation viz. a commitment to the existence of some determinate ineffable prerequisite of sense – '*bedrock*' – which, from our epistemic position, can only be gestured at and not explicitly described. Read thinks that such an ineffable thing could never be pointed out; so, no sense can ever be given to any term which refers to this sort of determinate prerequisite of sense.

The upshot of taking this worry on board, for Read, is that we must charitably read Wittgenstein's use of such terms as '*bedrock*' as exploiting their self-undermining nature, and that this exploitation is a form of showing something about language.

I take this thought of Read's to provide a valuable, though incomplete, insight into Wittgenstein's method: that terms like 'bedrock' are self-undermining if they are taken to refer to essential and determinate set of things provides a way of demonstrating that claims about prerequisites of sense cannot be descriptions in the truth-apt sense. Further, I take this neatly to illustrate the point around which this chapter is structured: attempts to eschew external explanation upon substantive grounds only reinstate the same sort of problem – a dilemma between senselessness and silence – at a deeper level. However, this is only half the story.

The reason it is only half the story is that there is still a major confusion here: demanding that uses of terms like 'bedrock' ought to be used only as a self-consciously self-undermining device, and so ultimately ought to be 'thrown away' once one has seen the point of them being so undermined, only makes sense if in so using 'bedrock', one thinks that one *must be referring* to an essential and determinate set of things as intrinsically normative. For it is only if we are trying to identify such ineffable prerequisites of sense (super-pictures), *and* if we realise that the very act of talking of 'what is at bedrock' must take a new normative context as its prerequisite if it is to make sense, that we are forced to realise that the requirement for a normative context makes this a never-ending process which is destructive to the possibility of *any talk* about ineffable prerequisites of sense having a sense at all.

In presuming that Wittgenstein's talk of 'bedrock' *must* be referring to a set of things which are *the* determinate prerequisites of sense, Read's worry operates within the same framework as Sacks' worry with the later Wittgenstein, which we explored in the previous chapter. Read offers the alternative solution within that same framework. In order to avoid the search for a self-undermining transcendental constraint – an ineffable *something* which structures sense – Read suggests (that Wittgenstein suggests that) we simply 'throw away the bedrock' once we are suitably enlightened.

My suggestion is that Read is mistaken in his reading of Wittgenstein because he misconstrues the role of prerequisites of sense in the later Wittgenstein's work. Between the earlier and later Wittgenstein there is agreement that certain sorts of

concept use require that there is something held fixed as a criterion.<sup>32</sup> However, in the *Tractatus*, that requirement is taken to be a backdrop of determinacy because propositions are there taken to be expressions of thoughts, and thoughts are there dogmatically supposed to have sense only if they picture a determinate way the world could be. Given this assumption, and given that thoughts must be internally related to the way the world is in order for such depiction to be possible, what can be simple must be similarly determinate.

From this position there is a clear link to the sort of problematic way of thinking of the prerequisites of sense which Read buys into, and, more generally, into thinking that whatever serves as a prerequisite for language use must be ineffable. If there are simples, then one cannot directly speak of simples: for there to be any sense to there being complexes, simples must occupy distinct places in logical space, for if their individuality were to be independent of their place, simple objects would have to be intelligible apart from their location in that space, and in that case, would not be simple. In this way, simples are differentiated by nothing more than being the determinate grounds of being able to articulate any differences at all. Determinate simples are prerequisites of complexes, and only complexes are capable of expressing claims of truth and falsity; as all meaningful language use is thought to be comprised of claims capable of truth or falsity, the possibility is not open of describing simples by appeal to anything but their relations within complexes.

For the early-Wittgenstein, then, there is a sense to there being determinate relations between simples, and so too a sense to a basic system of difference which structures the prerequisites of sense and so sets the parameters of what is sayable (of what complexes there can be); but we can say nothing of this system of difference, because saying *just is* the use of complex propositions; rather, we can only put the 'crystalline structure of language' (PI 107-108 (cf. n.26)) on display by comparing complexes.

For Read, as we have seen, this idea of there being ineffable prerequisites of sense survives the loss of the conceptual unity of language.

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<sup>32</sup> Recall that there is only one sort of concept use in the early Wittgenstein's work because of the assumption of the conceptual unity of language.

The idea of the essential and determinate prerequisites of sense is, then, in any guise, a variety of super-picture because it is the idea of a level of something which is intrinsically normative independently of language use. Looking to pictures which feature determinate prerequisites allows another way of exemplifying a means of disconnecting normative force and normative authority from one another because, by the lights of one who buys into the idea of there being determinate prerequisites of sense, those prerequisites cannot be spoken of without transgressing the bounds of sense.

The charge I am making against Read, then, is that he suffers from a problem of a kind with the problems that I, in the previous chapter, I claimed to afflict Sacks and Rorty. (Diamond identifies the same problem in Kripke's notion of a normative authority for attributions of metre-hood). Read instantiates a species of the problem which afflicts those who aim to show that external explanation is unintelligible by providing substantive grounds for the conclusion that external explanation is unintelligible. The deeper philosophical picture upon which Read's criticism rests instantiates precisely the sort of problem he is trying to avoid, because his criticism only works once it is tacitly assumed that a part of language can play a normative role only if there is a criterion for its correct use.

For these reasons, I think that Read provides a clear case of a philosopher attempting to apply the method I earlier used Diamond as an example of – attacking an underlying philosophical picture rather than a claim within that picture – but failing to press the attack home because of a failure to shake off the central commitments of the target philosophical picture.

From examining Read we see the the folly of talking about such criteria as if they were themselves metaphysically essential determinate things, or nothing at all. I now want return to Kripke to concentrate on how we ought to talk about what is criterial to a description.

## **4.2 Embeddedness**

At PI 50 Wittgenstein claims that



There is one thing of which one can say neither that it is one metre long, nor that it is not one metre long, and that is the standard metre in Paris. – But this is, of course, not to ascribe any extraordinary property to it, but only to mark its peculiar role in the language-game of measuring with a metre-rule.

Kripke objects that the idea that a physical stick has no length in metres is obviously too absurd to be accepted (1980; 54). His solution is to explain away the standard metre-stick's apparent odd property by providing a clear distinction between the metaphysical and epistemological elements of the stick's role in our practices of measuring. He attempts to draw such a distinction by claiming that Wittgenstein is confusing the means of fixing reference with what is referred to; or put otherwise, the length of the metre-stick in Paris is not a normative authority for our judgements concerning metres, it rather merely serves, or, more particularly, has served, as a means to establishing a normative authority.

What fixing the reference amounts to for Kripke is the entrance of a concept into our repertoire through 'baptism': a concept is brought into currency by making use of the accidental way one's environment currently is as a backdrop from which to draw demonstrative content. We pick out from the environment an instantiation of something with particular modal qualities (for example, in the current case, in all possible worlds, fitting exactly inside a particular set of things), and by doing so, free our ability to attribute those particular modal qualities from their instantiation in the accidental features of the environment.

On Kripke's picture, then, the stick's length is merely an accidental means to determining the essence of the concept we are after; as far as Kripke is concerned, this means that

...even though [Wittgenstein] uses [the metre-stick in Paris] to fix the reference of his standard of length, a metre, he can still say, 'if heat had been applied to this stick S at  $t'$  then at  $t_0$  stick S would not have been one metre long. (1980;55)

And so, given that we can make sense of the falsity of "S is one metre long", we can

also make sense of its truth. It then seems clear that,

...the metaphysical status of 'S is one metre long' will be that of a contingent statement, provided that 'one metre' is regarded as a rigid designator: under appropriate stresses and strains, heatings or coolings, S would have had a length other than one metre even at  $t_0$ .  
(*ibid*; 56)

Thus, for Kripke, the sentence 'S is 1 metre long at  $t_0$ ' is knowable as true *a priori* – for we do not in any sense have to investigate the status of the stick to verify it – and this, for Kripke, explains away the sense in which we cannot doubt that S is a metre long at  $t_0$ ; but this is merely because the stick is one metre long by stipulation. So we are certainly not committed to the stick necessarily continuing to be one metre long – it was only *a priori* one metre long at the moment it was used in the baptism of a concept because of a contingent fact about its epistemological role. More importantly, once we are clear about this separation between epistemology and metaphysics, we can see that once we have baptised the concept of a metre, we are perfectly free to say that the fact 'S is one metre long at  $t_0$ ' may well have been false, it may well inasmuch as we can make sense of the sort of counterfactuals which describe ways in which the stick could have been different.

It now may look as though common sense has shown Wittgenstein's claim – that the stick itself, when used as the metre stick, is a prerequisite of any thing's being a metre long, so it itself can be neither a metre nor not one metre – to be unsustainable. If we follow Kripke, then we ought to think that the fact that we make use of physical objects in particular ways, viz. in bringing certain categorial tools into use, in no way commits us to the stick itself being in some sense unaccountable to the system of measurement. To do so would be to fail to distinguish sharply enough between the stick itself – a contingent way the world happens to be – and the way in which we carve the world up. Further, to do so would be to deny the reflexivity of the relation of measurement: it would be to deny that the act of measurement could be applied to the measure.

The matter, however, is not quite so neatly resolved; furthermore, it is clear that an examination of the resolution is going to help us to make sense of the role of objects

within our grammar. To see why the matter is not so neatly involved we have to uncover the fact that if we read Wittgenstein and Kripke as engaging upon a common philosophical framework – one upon which there is a clear division between metaphysics and epistemology – then we have already attributed to Wittgenstein the sort of thesis he is trying to resist. For, as we saw at the end of the last chapter, what is at issue here is, as we saw at the end of the last chapter, is what makes the contingent properties of things like the stick, and indeed the notion of contingency itself, intelligible to us at all. For Kripke, I will argue, the answer must involve some species of *super-picture*, whereas for Wittgenstein, it cannot.

#### **4.21 Clarification**

Before we examine Kripke's conception of what the normative authorities for concepts like 'metre' are like in more detail, we ought to first get clear about a claim Wittgenstein is *not* making. Wittgenstein is not claiming that the metre stick in Paris has no length in metres determinable by measurement because the stick itself has no determinate length. Attributing such a claim to Wittgenstein would place Wittgenstein and Kripke on a common philosophical frame, and also lead us to misread Kripke's claims against Wittgenstein.

The claim that the standard metre-stick has no determinate length in metres because it has no determinate length is worth considering for, although it is false, there are *in a certain light* good reasons to think it true. Considering those reasons in that light brings out both important complexities concerning what measuring the metre stick amounts to, and, further, certain key methodological considerations which will later serve to distinguish Wittgenstein from Wittgenstein-as-Kripke-reads-him.

More particularly, it is useful to consider this claim for two related reasons: 1) because it will help to sharpen our picture of the particular essentialist presumption Kripke has which commits him to an idea of 'super-pictures'; 2) because it points to a use Wittgenstein was making of the idea of the metre stick in Paris which Kripke (because of (1)) could not be open to (and so sets the ground for describing how Kripke actually misreads Wittgenstein). Once again, identifying a misreading of Wittgenstein is going to show us a particular way in which one can invoke a metaphysical picture in order to

connect normative force and normative authority. It is probably clear now, in general terms, how this is going to proceed.

To see why someone might end up thinking that the length of the metre stick in Paris is not determinable by measurement because the stick has no determinate length, let us start with the thought that *merely* recognizing that we can deploy different systems of measurement with regard to the same object might allow us grounds for separating the epistemological (our methods of measurement) from the metaphysical (a contingent fact concerning the stick's objective extension).

One might think, for instance, that by using a concept like 'inches' to talk of the length of the standard metre-stick, we come to see that the property 'length' outstrips any particular practices of measurement we may deploy; that it is because 'length' is an objective property which is independent of any practices of measurement that the length of an object can receive varying yet commensurable determinations.

The picture invoked is then one of a content being taken up by various compatible schemes in the sense which Davidson found passable; that is where the relation of scheme to content is as

the existence of various scales for recording temperatures or lengths is to the reality or objectivity of temperature or length (Davison 2001; 215).

So, if we do take this attitude to magnitudes of extension, or lengths, we might think Kripke is giving a short answer to Wittgenstein when he says:

If the stick is a stick, for example, 39.37 inches long (I assume we have some different standard for inches), why isn't it one metre long? (Kripke 1980; 53)

Such a quick answer, though, might be thought to reveal the mistaken assumption of essentialism about concepts I am imputing to Kripke (although it does not), for if we take it that the measure of an inch is also determined by some physical standard,

[t]o posit an equivalence between metres and inches can never amount to anything more

than approximation, if the two units are truly independent and their equivalence not merely stipulative. We must then ask whether we can ever get exact equivalences where entirely different units are concerned. Perhaps not, again, if they are independent, because even in principle we can only physically compare them, and physical comparisons and judgments of coextension are inherently approximative. (Jacquette 2010; 61)

That is, unless there is something which is essentially a metre, or an essentially an inch, then definition of one in terms of the other – ultimately by way of physical comparison – merely serves to reconstitute the same problem. Further, as our discussion of the superfluity of super-pictures showed, even if there was such a thing as the essential inch, it would be of no use to us anyway.

So, it now looks as though it may be right to say 'the metre stick in Paris has no length determined by measurement because the stick has no determinate length'. Following through this thought, though, ought to make us think that neither does anything else, for any straightforward measurement by way of one of the standards is approximate in the same way as was a problem for the measurement of the standard in terms of the standard.

Here, we can start to get a flavour of why the thought that 'the metre stick in Paris has no length determined by measurement because the stick has no determinate length' cannot be Wittgenstein's point (nor the thesis Kripke takes Wittgenstein to hold). This is because for this to be Wittgenstein's thesis – that the length of the metre stick is indeterminable – Wittgenstein would have to share in the idea of determinacy, and more particularly what it is to be determined by measurement, which is operative in the above discussion.

Wittgenstein does not share this view of determinacy; rather,

For Wittgenstein, the buck stops with the criteriological role of a unit of measurement, a sample, set aside as an archetype in terms of which other things are judged, but for which there exists no fully exact independent standard for meaningful pronouncements of whatever property or predication for whose application it is supposed to provide a practical test. (Jacquette 2010; 62)

That is, determinacy is to be thought of in accordance with the degree of exactness required to meet whatever practical tasks we have undertaken which require measuring and measurements.<sup>33</sup> To think of the determinacy which is required as defined by something else over and above the practical ends of a particular practice would be to buy back into either using a super-picture as source of normative authority for claims of determinacy or to take our scheme to be imposing determinacy upon the world. It is thus perfectly fine to attribute determinate measurements to things if one is not doing so in a manner which assumes a absolute notion of determinacy.

Once we make the shift to a less absolute view of determinacy, we can allow that the length of the standard metre stick is measurable – we can measure it in inches and, with sufficient determinacy, convert this measurement to metres (we might even check the constancy of the inch standard in this way if we, for instance, thought it might have been left out in the sun for too long). To do so, however, is not to do anything towards *determining* the length of the standard metre-stick in metres, nor towards measuring the standard metre-stick in metres, for, as we will see below (cf. 4.22), the standard metre-stick is the determinator of measurements in metres (although, if we were, say, adjusting the metre-stick in order to make the metric and imperial measurement systems more easily comparable, it could be so determining, but then we would not be using inches only to *measure* the metre-stick, we would be determining the concept 'metre').

What this discussion is intended to bring out is that if one is committed to a sort of absolute determinacy then this is at odds with the sense of measurements determining lengths that we can be happy with. Kripke, we should be clear, never claimed that the standard metre stick's length was determined by measurement, he only claimed that it was one metre long, that the metre had been determined so by stipulation, and that nothing about these facts excluded the possibility of its measurement – this is the whole point of considering it to be knowable *a priori* that the standard metre stick is a metre long. My previous discussion of the relation between inches and metres was intended merely to fill out, so that we might refute it more clearly later, the proper

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<sup>33</sup> Avital (2008) brings this out nicely (cf. 4.25), although she undermines this account by making the mistake of bringing determinacy into her argument in the way I am arguing one ought not to in this section. I deal with the confusion caused by treating determinacy in this way in 4.24.

sense of the apparent platitude Kripke appeals to: that if a metre has an equivalent measure in inches, and we can measure the metre stick in inches, then we can also measure the metre-stick in metres.

I do, however, think the faulty view of determinacy identified above is implicit within Kripke's claims about the truth-aptness of claims about the metre-stick being a metre long; and I also think that this view of determinacy relies upon an unwarranted assumption of a clear distinction between facts of meaning and what we do with facts of meaning. To get to this lurking determinacy we need to get clear about what the measurement of the standard upon the metric it establishes – even via a conversion to inches – could amount to.

Although dropping the idea of absolute determinacy (as opposed to the demands of particular practices giving sense to the use of 'determinate') is not the same as dropping the idea that there are determinate prerequisites of sense, the two ideas are closely related. If one thinks that there are determinate prerequisites of sense then one does buy into a form of absolute determinacy, for one must imagine that there is a sort of determinacy governing language use which is intelligible in abstraction from that language use. Likewise, if one believes in absolute determinacy, one believes in a particular sort of standard which both stands beyond our practices and makes normative demands upon our practices.

Part of dropping either absolute determinism or commitment to determinate prerequisites of sense is coming to see criterial objects as embedded within a logical space, and becoming so by being selected from another particular logical space. As such, dropping the idea of absolute determinacy leads one to see that anything held as criterial is so held because it is responsive to the practical demands of the logical space within which it is used as a normative authority, and as such is always liable to be modified in accordance with those demands.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The standard metre stick in Paris, for instance, gave an appropriate degree of determinacy for certain tasks. Now it does not, and so we use the distance light travels when shifting from one part of the spectrum to another as a criterion (I demonstrate this sort of claim in more detail later (cf. 4.24-4.25)).

#### **4.22 Kripke's Super Metre-Stick**

Diamond's treatment of Kripke's conception of the role of the standard metre in Paris revolves around a difference between transitive and intransitive uses of language which she finds in Wittgenstein's Blue Book.

Now the use of the word "particular" is apt to produce a kind of delusion and roughly speaking this delusion is produced by the double usage of this word. On the one hand, we may say, it is used preliminary to a specification, description, comparison; on the other hand, as what one might describe as an emphasis. The first usage I shall call the transitive one, the second the intransitive one. Thus, on the one hand I say "This face gives me a particular impression which I can't describe". The latter sentence may mean something like: "This face gives me a strong impression". These examples would perhaps be more striking if we substituted the word "peculiar" for "particular", for the same comments apply to "peculiar". If I say "This soap has a peculiar smell: it is the kind we used as children", the word "peculiar" may be used merely as an introduction to the comparison which follows it, as though I said "I'll tell you what this soap smells like:...". If, on the other hand, I say "This soap has a peculiar smell!" or "It has a most peculiar smell", "peculiar" here stands for some such expression as "out of the ordinary", "uncommon", "striking". (BB; 158)

As Diamond reads it this is, roughly, a description of a difference between cases in which we express something by comparing something with something else – transitive cases – and statements where we are simply expressing – intransitive cases. Or we might say it is a difference between statements claiming an object's accordance with a standard and statements which are used to establish an object as a standard.

The way we normally make sense of something's being a metre or not is clearly transitive: we do so by comparing a thing with an object which instantiates metre-hood, and take it this thing also instantiates metre-hood because it has a particular normative significance in virtue of a further transitive relation which it bears to the standard metre-stick. That is, we make sense of something's being a metre or not by asking if the relevant comparison to the metre intransitively defined would make a transitive statement true or false.



If Kripke is maintaining that the sentence “the metre stick is 1 metre long at  $t_0$ ” is true in the same sense as an ordinary claim that some length is one metre is true, it is made true by a transitive relation. What, though, can the comparison be between when we are referring to the baptism of the concept? In the absence of anything which is essentially a metre prior to the baptism of the concept, the comparison can only be between the metre stick and itself. If this is the case there here lies concealed nonsense. Diamond exposes this nonsense by comparing the idea that we can know it to be true that the metre-stick is a metre at  $t_0$  because it is the same length as itself to a case where we,

Imagine someone saying: "But I know how tall I am!" and laying his hand on top of his head to prove it. (PI 279)

That is, Diamond exposes the claim that 'the metre-stick is one metre long at  $t_0$ ' a case of a “non-comparison represented as a comparison” (2001; 120).

Recognising that Kripke thinks that the source of normative authority for our practice of measuring in metres is this particular reflexive relation instantiated at a particular point in time allows us to see clearly why a standard thus conceived could not function as a standard. A claim made true by comparison to a standard,

...hangs in the air unless there is some context, either one that actually exists or one we can imagine, in which we can see what it is to count as making comparisons with the standard (*op. cit.*; 105 )

And Kripke's standard for the application of the concept of a metre is, once inaugurated, contextless. It is part of Kripke's description of the normative authority for the concept of a metre that it does not connect with our established techniques for talking about measuring in metres.

Thus, (as we saw in Diamond's argument summary in 4.1) Diamond is not claiming that Kripke's indexing of the normative authority of the standard to a point in time ( $t_0$ ) is in itself problematic, for it is quite possible to imagine a situation in which doing so

is useful, and, as Diamond pointed out (cf. 4.1) *if* the standard had normative force there is nothing in principle stopping us making a comparison to how a thing was at a time in the past. The problem is that the relation between a stick and itself at a particular time, inasmuch as it is contextless, lacks a capacity to exert normative force – it can play no role in the ongoing material practice of comparing things lengths.

So, on Kripke's picture we end up with a criterion which is normatively inert and which can only be brought to life by endowing it with the role of a super-picture – by stipulating it to be essentially and intrinsically normative, and, after baptism, a determinate prerequisite of sense. Considering the status of the concept of a normative authority for the concept 'metre' in Kripke's picture, then, shows Kripke is still in the grips of the Kantian dilemma: he is trapped between senselessness (appealing to a comparison between a thing and itself – an empty reflexive relation), and super-pictures (something which is essentially a metre but *superfluously* so).

What we need to do to avoid this dilemma is to find a way of transitioning from the idea of a conceptual framework constituted by determinate prerequisites of sense (be it categories of the understanding, simple names, or essential metres), to an idea of a framework which is arbitrary in a particular sense which appears in this quotation from Zettel:

Why don't I call cookery rules arbitrary, and why am I tempted to call the rules of grammar arbitrary? Because 'cookery' is defined by its end, whereas 'speaking' is not. That is why the use of language is in a certain sense autonomous, as cooking and washing are not. You cook badly if you are guided in your cooking by rules other than the right ones; but if you follow other rules than those of chess you are playing another game; and if you follow grammatical rules other than such-and-such ones, that does not mean that you say something wrong, no, you are speaking of something else. (Z320)

On this understanding, the grammar of a logical space is autonomous and any etiological story there is to tell about the prerequisites of the grammar of a particular logical space is like a story one would tell about the movement from playing chess to playing a similar but different game. To explicate the significance of this notion of arbitrariness, I want to characterize a part of Diamond's method as a response to a

rebuttal which might currently look available to Kripke.

#### **4.23 Reflexivity and Super-pictures**

The problem Diamond has identified with Kripke's treatment of the standard metre-stick is that it invokes an idea of an essential metre, or a metre's essence, which is superfluous as far as capturing the role the metre stick plays in our practices of measurement goes. Kripke's best chance at offering a rebuttal, then, would be to show that his account in fact allows something vital to the role of the standard metre-stick.

Thus, Kripke might say something like the following: our best way of describing meaningful behaviour is giving a truth-conditional analysis. However, if we cannot attribute truth conditions to claims regarding the length of the standard metre-stick in metres, we have, as it were, a hole in our account of logical space; and if we have a hole in logical space, we cannot account for the sort of exclusion and entailment relations which we are committed to in using concepts. So if we are to capture the role of the standard metre-stick we must, somehow, find a way to make claims like 'the standard-metre stick is one metre long at  $t_0$ ' come out true.

Kripke, then, would claim that accepting the *truth* of the claim that the standard-metre stick is a metre long at  $t_0$ , whilst in an important sense empty, is very useful indeed; and that as our only candidate for a truth-maker for the standard metre-stick is the standard metre-stick, the truth of the claim 'the standard metre-stick is one metre long at  $t_0$ ' depends upon the reflexive relation of identity, and it is necessary that it does.

I do not have the space or scope to provide an explication or analysis of Kripke's views upon essence and identity here. What I would like to do instead is to:

- 1) Reinforce the thought that the idea of reflexive relations exerting normative force is closely linked to the disembodiment which makes super-pictures superfluous;
- 2) Describe a sense in which it is appropriate to treat a reflexive relation as true *simpliciter* because treating it in this way allows us the use of an object of

comparison – a language game with which we model some aspect of how we already use language.

With regard to (1), consider Diamond's summary of part of her paper:

In much contemporary philosophy of language, 'reflexive' examples are treated as if they were not themselves possible indications of philosophical fishiness. By “Schnee”, we say, the Germans mean snow, by “snow” we mean snow. A transitive use is put first to make our intransitive use appear like a special case of the transitive use. Or we have: “Schnee is weiss” is true-in-German if and only if snow is white, and “Snow is white” is true-in-English if and only if snow is white. My argument in this part of the paper has been that we should bethink ourselves of this similarity between saying “I know what the sentence 'Snow is white' means, it means that snow is white” and saying I know how tall I am, I am *this* tall!” while laying one's hand on ones head. The emphasis on “*this* tall” doesn't make the words and gestures give one's knowledge of one's height; mental concentration on white snow (or anything else) doesn't make the words “It means that snow is white” state something about meaning that one knows. My height can be used to give you someone else's height, an English sentence to give you the meaning of a German one, or of another English sentence, but repeating a sentence and taking its quotes off is putting your hand on your own head. (2001; p132-133)

As with super-pictures, then, the problem with the idea of the relation of the standard metre-stick to itself making it true that the standard metre-stick is a metre at  $t_0$ , is with the expectation that the simple recognition of a reflexive relation adds something to our knowledge of a concept because it expresses something essential about that concept. Rather, the relation considered in isolation is normatively inert (in the way illustrated at PI 430). The reflexive relation is thus superfluous to description of the role of the standard metre-stick in the same way as putting 'emphasis on “*this* tall” doesn't make the words and gestures give one's knowledge of one's height' (*ibid*).

The problem, then, is not that we *cannot* allow that we give sense to the attribution of truth to the standard-metre stick being a metre in any context. The problem is peculiar to the situation in which we do use metre-sticks to measure things: if such a reflexive relation grounds the criteria for metre-hood we use in our practices of measurement, at best it does not contribute to our understanding of the standard metre-stick playing the

role within our normative lives which it does, and at worst it makes an unnecessary mystery of its role.

Wittgenstein stresses this at PI 50 when he qualifies his claim about the attribution of truth and falsity to claims about the standard metre-stick as regards its length in meters, with the further claim that to claim the inapplicability of truth and falsity in this context is just to mark the peculiar role of that particular stick within the practice of measuring in metres. The peculiar role of the standard metre stick in the context of our practice of measurement is that of an arbitrarily selected unaccountable criterion in the manner I first introduced with regard to mathematical novelty in my discussion of Steiner (cf. 2.53-2.54).

The last few paragraphs have been an attempt to reinforce the point that reflexive relations are not founts of normative force. In the following sections I want to show that this in no way stops us from imagining a normative context in which we do attribute truth or falsity to ascriptions of a property to the sample which is a criterion for that property in a way which it is not appropriate in its normal context of use. I want to do so to emphasise that the use of counterfactuals with regard to a criterion (in imagining contexts in which it is true, and contexts in which it is false, that an object is the criterion for the property we do take it to be a criterion for) is a useful enterprise which is not debarred by anything I have asserted, or assented to, so far. Furthermore, I want to make clear that if we do debar this possibility, we would buy back into a picture in which sense is determinate.

That reflexive relations are not founts of normative force does not stop us from appealing to normative contexts in which the role particular samples play can be treated as truth-apt. Showing as much will serve to show that, even if a truth-functional analysis is our best tool for *describing* some aspects of concept use (such as entailment and exclusion relations), there is nothing in recognising that the standard metre-stick is one metre long or not one metre long when used as a criterion for measuring in metres which hinders making such descriptions. Nothing stops us from giving sense to the claim that 'the length of the standard metre as essentially one metre long at  $t_0$ ' in *particular* contexts.

Although there is nothing stopping us creating and using a language with *seemingly* substantive prerequisites in order usefully to describe our practice of measurement in metres, it is, however, important to keep in mind that this practice is parasitic upon what we do when we measure in metres, and does not present a prior constraint upon our practice of doing so. That is, to reiterate the point of the thesis which I summaries in the introduction (cf. p.11), it is important not to confuse what is an object of comparison and what is an object of investigation in any given instance of investigation. For doing so both encourages one towards the failings of transcendental idealism, and obscures the object of investigation.

#### **4.24 Avital's Misplaced Concern: Arbitrariness Again**

Earlier on we examined the intuition that the metre stick had no length which could be determined by measurement because it had no determinate length. Here are two more related intuitions:

- the standard metre stick cannot change size;
- if the standard metre stick changes size then so does the length of a metre.

These three intuitions are related by a common assumption: whatever plays a criterial role, is, once inaugurated, fixed as such. Because of this common assumption, all of these intuitions are at odds with the sentiment of Zettel 320 (see above); and, more importantly, they all engender an idea of our conceptual framework which is more Tractarian than is desirable.

The general idea underlying these bad intuitions is this: if the metre-stick is the highest standard of authority as regards what we can count as a metre then:

- 1) it makes no sense to say of the metre-stick that has changed size (for it is the measure of size).
- 2) If the highest standard of authority for what counts as a metre changes, then we cannot make sense of the metre not changing if the standard does. We cannot drive apart the size of the stick and the length of a metre.

Another way of characterising the relationship between these intuitions, then, is that they are all anxieties about the use of counterfactuals with regard to the role of a particular criterion.

Key to Diamond's account, however, is that she does not disallow the usefulness of counterfactuals which express the possibility of things we take to be playing a criterial role having been different. Rather, part of Diamond's method of showing that Kripke still retains a commitment to the sort of nonsense which I have been associating with super-pictures relies upon the sense of such counterfactuals: they are vital to showing that, whilst we can make sense of the sample of a metre having been different, this does not allow us to make sense of an object's normative force by comparing that thing with itself – by stating what appears to be a concept's essence.

More particularly, a part of Diamond's argument involves imagining a person, Susan, and a possible Susan-had-she-taken-her-vitamins standing next to one another, and then comparing their heights upon an imaginary drawing board. This imagining is a tool intended to show the difference between imagining measuring Susan with a Susan-metre (that is, where Susan taken as a standard of measurement), and imagining measuring a Susan-had-she-taken-her-vitamins with a Susan-metre. In the way established in section 4.22 we can make sense of the latter, but not the former, for the latter is a genuine comparison whilst the first is a non-comparison dressed up as a comparison.

Avital claims that Diamond's method is flawed:

[s]he uses her drawing board to simulate a Platonic universe of a sense, since she can now locate in this space the height she reads off Susan. This being the standard Metre (the height read off or abstracted onto the page), she can now test the height of Susan-had-she-taken-her-vitamins against it, considering that in the counterfactual scenario, there is no Susan-had-she-not- taken-her-vitamins, whose height could serve as a standard against which to compare the counterfactual-Susan (I suspect this would be very much Malcolm's point against a position such as Diamond's). Now, if this is the exercise that Diamond is trying to carry out, then it is equally applicable to the scenario of setting Susan's height against itself, against the standard of height abstracted off her,

which she indeed fits perfectly, in fact, a priori, however, as Kripke puts it, only contingently. Hence, falling back onto Kripke's reconstruction of the difficulty seems unavoidable. (2008; 327)

At first there seems to be something very gripping about this criticism: it looks like Diamond is making use of the very sort of super-picture that her argument aims to show is unintelligible. Diamond has invoked a backdrop against which to judge true or false claims about the relative heights of Susan and Susan-had-she-eaten-her-vitamins.

It seems, then, that even to entertain the idea of a comparison of criteria in order to show that Kripke is helping himself to a metaphysical determinacy where he ought not be, is to make the mistake of thinking we can make sense of a Susan having a length in the absence of a wider practice of measurement; of Susan being a Susan-metre in the absence of any normative context. For to make sense of Susan having been different we must tacitly accept the idea of a neutral framework against which to compare the two Susans. Yet if we accept this we seem also to be forced to accept the idea that it makes sense to attribute truth and falsity to criteria.

This criticism, however, holds only if we ignore the wider methodological significance of the movement from absolute to practice-dependent determinacy; from the Tractarian conception of simples to the *Investigations'* (I) criteriological objects. It only holds if, in the way I showed is true of Read's reading of Wittgenstein in the last section, we move to a way of thinking of sense such that we can ground a practice using a criterial sample whilst still tacitly maintaining a presupposition regarding language use having determinate prerequisites.

The reason why counterfactuals are essential to Diamond's method and acceptable as such, is, then, the same reason that, if missed, makes Diamond seem to be buying back into Platonism (by allowing a backdrop to the Susans which does not stand in need of explanation). The reason is this: to articulate things about criteria – whatever constitutes the bedrock of a particular language game – and not just to articulate criteria (as one would by way of intransitive definitions), one must find a way to talk about criteria. To talk about criteria one must locate them amidst a wider normative context (or logical space), which allows one to treat them transitively. The articulation



of such a space is enabled by the use of counterfactuals; that is, counterfactuals are required to articulate the possibility of the selection of a sufficiently different item from a logical space which includes the sample we are interested in talking about. We thus compare possible candidates for samples which have largely the same salient modal properties by invoking a common context from which different candidates for being a normative authority could be selected.

This counterfactual articulation is only problematic if we take talk of criterial things like *bedrock* and *ways of going on* to be making reference to some absolute transcendental feature – but to do so would be to make the mistake Read made (cf. 4.13). It would be tacitly to assume that if there is meaning there is a substantive object of meaning. If there is no such determinator of meaning, we are free to hold some parts of things we already do fixed, whilst varying others, in order to explore the role that criterial objects do play. In doing so we are merely talking about how we might have used some different, but importantly similar, language games of which different but importantly similar objects are used as criteria.

What Diamond's use of counterfactuals trades upon, then, is the sense of 'arbitrary' which I first pointed to in my discussion of Steiner (cf. 2.5-2.6). The criterion for a given logical space is arbitrary inasmuch as it is selected from a prior logical space, and there is no sense in attributing a judgement of correctness or incorrectness to that selection. Once we have this idea of arbitrariness in mind we can pair this idea with the thought brought out in Zettel 320: by using a chess board and chess pieces in a different way we play a different game which is nevertheless comparable to chess because of the internal relation it bears to chess.

To consolidate this point, let us cast Kripke's confusion as a confusion between something internal to the enterprise of measurement and a prerequisite of the enterprise of measurement. Kripke confuses a logical space within which differences are articulated by internal relations (which are best expressed as counterfactuals), with the criterial role of objects which are used to inaugurate such logical spaces. Thus, Kripke misses that from the point of the inaugurated logical space, the rules could not be different (viz. counterfactuals could not be applied to them). The way this confusion manifests, then, is in:

...an unclarity concerning the distinction...between factual statements and statements of a rule. Briefly, Kripke seems problematically to assume that a (token) sentence could play the roles of a factual statement and a rule simultaneously. (Kuusela 2008; 31)

This is a confusion which we can avoid by firstly, getting clear that something cannot meaningfully be both criterial and, at the same time, subject to judgement made by reference to that criteria; and secondly, seeing that just because our use of metre is accountable to a particular criterion, there is nothing stopping us imagining that our use of 'metre' could have been accountable to different criteria for a different end (but one sufficiently closely related to warrant us calling both uses of criteria uses of the concept 'metre'). There is nothing stopping us imagining a different normative context because the logical space from which the standard metre stick was sampled is accessible to us, and we are free to imagine having used a different part of that space as a criterion for the attribution of the property 'metre'.

Diamond's invocation of Susan-had-she-eaten-her-vitamins, then, is an exercise of the open-endedness of grammar in order to show that, because there is no ultimate conceptual unity underwritten by a determinate set of criteria, there is nothing stopping us from imagining particular criteria within a wider context in which it can be compared to similar things. The only thing which would stop us imagining in this way would be if talk of bedrock transgressed what is sayable in the way Read worried about, and the only thing which would allow such a worry a foothold in the case of the concept of a metre would be buying into the thought that there is some criterion for the use of the concept 'metre' which outstripped the worldly context in which measuring in metres is useful.

The relation of this section to point 2) of the last section is making clear that it that it is legitimate to prise apart:

- accepting that there is no sense to the standard metre-stick being a metre long or not a metre long in the usual context of making measurements in metres;
- accepting that we cannot talk about the standard metre-stick having a length in any context.

We can prise these claims apart because we *can* set the criteria for the attribution of metre-hood against a context (imaginary or otherwise) which allows us to talk of it as happening to be a particular way, or set out other possible ways it could have been by identifying other possible candidates for being the same sort of criterion.

One such context allows us to treat natural language as accountable to an ideal of an all-encompassing logical structure. We might entertain this thought in order to bring out some interesting structural features of what we do with language, like the mapping of entailment and exclusion relations which featured in my imagined retort from Kripke (cf p.162). We may do so for any number of other reasons too.

However, if we lose sight of the fact we are *entertaining* the idea of language having a particular sort of conceptual unity for the purposes of making an object of comparison, we risk taking a dis-analogy between language use and description of that language use to be presenting us with an actual problem standing in the way of our meaningful use of language.

I'll return to these themes – particularly to the idea of a substantive language ('the crystalline purity of logic'(PI 107-108)) being a requirement of investigating actual language use – in a more general way in the final section of this chapter. Before that I will bring out the relations the claims of this and the previous chapter bear to the claims I made about relations within and between logical spaces in 2.4-2.5.

#### **4.25 Avital's Insights**

Once we undermine Avital's attack upon Diamond in the above manner, and so also undermine Avital's questionably metaphysical claims concerning the *necessarily* fixed size of the metre-stick in Paris, we can nevertheless salvage some of Avital's insights in order to make in a fuller way the claims I have been making since my discussion of Steiner (2.4-2.5), about the inauguration of, and transition between, logical spaces.

Avital draws connections between the arbitrary nature of samples, the relations of samples to things which are held normatively accountable, and the idea that in such

logical spaces normative force can be exerted by way of modal relations between things of a common kind (of the sort we examined in chapter 2 of the thesis (cf. 2.2-2.21)). The connection rest upon what Avital terms the 'Same Logical Type Maxim' (henceforth, SLT):

SLT, in fact, could be given a rather formal presentation. The object of comparison is a sample. The very idea of sampling here is presupposing the following two assumptions: (i) There is a sample space from where the sampling takes place, and (ii) The sampling is arbitrary. To these two assumptions, we could now add the rule that says that the standard cannot be applied to itself: (iii) The sampled object is the standard, and therefore, the statements, which are now made possible and are applicable to all members of the sample-space, are not applicable to the standard, e.g. asserting or negating that the standard is satisfied makes no sense when the standard itself is the object in question. (2008; 336)

The idea of a 'sample space' from which we arbitrarily pick samples featured in (i) is then the idea of a pre-existing logical space from within which we can pick out objects – made intelligible by virtue of their place within that logical space – in order to inaugurate a new logical space. This is the idea which I drew upon in the last chapter in order to spell out a notion of arbitrariness and which dispelled Sacks' worries about relativism (cf. 3.31-3.41), and in this chapter I drew upon to show that appeals to a level of understanding at which interpretation is not needed is not to appeal to super-pictures or conventionalism (cf. 4.12).

The useful work which Avital does with this formal presentation of what it takes to enter into novel logical spaces is to give a solid example of how the internal relations which are constitutive of a newly inaugurated logical space are parasitic upon the internal relations of the sample space; and further, that the internal relations which are constitutive of a sample space include the sort of modal relations we appeal to when individuating things of a particular empirical kind.

Avital shows this sort of dependence in the case of the case of the standard metre-stick by first asking us to

... assume that we are in possession of a perfect rod, the ethereal or Platonic one unit of measure as established by points A and B. We may do this by way of exploiting the contingency of the fact that rod S's edges approximate at a time  $t_0$  the points A and B. Let us further assume that the point of the exercise is to fit a drawer into a desk, both made of the same material substance, in this case platinum. We now use a measure or a ruler to determine whether the objects fit or not. But if our ruler is the ethereal or Platonic rod ( $|AB|$ ), which we may term a “transcendental measuring-rod,” we would soon find it to be of no use. The point is that we may assume that the two objects produced (the desk and the drawer) match in length. We measure one of the objects with the transcendental measuring rod and it measures one metre in length. We then go on to measure the second object, but the difference in temperature between the two instances of time when the measuring takes place are such that the material objects extend in length, perhaps, say, they double in length. The transcendental measuring rod is not material and, therefore, is not “corrupted” by changes in temperature. It would read now for the second object the number of two units of measure. We may then conclude that the two objects do not measure the same length, although in fact they do. But if we had a ruler made of platinum, the futility of the measuring exercise described above would, of course, have been avoided. (Avital 2008; 329)

What the example is intended to show, then, is that for the standard metre to be useful the standard-metre must be internally related to the things it measures by virtue of sharing a salient set of modal relations with those things (in the above example, the same sensitivity to temperature). So, if we want to measure platinum in a way useful for certain platinum-relative ends, then we inaugurate a practice of measurement by sampling from the logical space of platinum that we once inaugurated by sampling platinum as an exemplar of certain modal properties.

In this way, given that the standard metre is of the same kind under some description as the stuff it is used to measure (that is, given that there already a set of salient internal relations which both share), there is no question about how the normative force of the normative authority is realised because,

... the sampling of an object is responsible for the construct of a concept or a measure (a function), such that all objects in the sample (in the role of arguments of the

function) have values assigned to them as the outcome of the measure. (*op. cit.*; 335)

And the values in question are assigned to the relevant objects in the same way as a force is distributed through a field, by way of an internal relation; that is, it is in the same sense as in the *Tractatus* a

...proposition does not exist and then have to be put in logical relations with other propositions. Rather, insofar as a proposition is a determination of logical space, it already stands in logical relations to the totality of propositions that constitute the whole of logical space: 'A proposition can determine only one place in logical space: nevertheless the whole of logical space must already be given by it' (TLP 3.4). The logical relation between a proposition and the rest of logical space is not one that has to be established. An internal relation between a proposition and the whole of logical space is intrinsic to the system of representation to which a proposition essentially belongs and which constitutes it as the proposition it is. (McGinn 2006; 216)

That is, the relations of responsibility within a particular logical space are nothing over and above the internal relations which are intrinsic to that particular space; which are, in turn, nothing over and above the properties of the things within a certain sample space. To think relations of responsibility within a particular logical space are something over and above the internal relations at play is to invoke something both superfluous and metaphysically problematic (cf. 2.5-2.6).

Considering Avital's account of inaugurating logical spaces, then, allows us to retain the useful sense in which simples were internally related to one another in the *Tractatus*, whilst freeing us from the thought that if there are simples which are essentially internally related, - they are as a consequence beyond the realm of the sayable. If we, however, followed Avital in demanding that criterial items, from the point of view of a practitioner, could not be different, then we buy back into a modified idea of Tractarian determinacy, and lose the connection between the criterion and its arbitrary selection from an empirical context.

Importantly in all of this, we have lost the need to look for a criteria of correctness for judgements within a particular logical space from *outside* of that logical space. And, relatedly, we have lost the need to see one sort of logical space being built upon

another as a relation of justification, and so have retained an important sense in which each logical space is autonomously normative.

#### **4.3 The Use of Mythological Method**

The points which I initially made in the overview given in 2.5-2.6 have now been filled out. Objects themselves – considered as normative role players – can play a criterial role, and so form part of our grammar. Objects could not play the roles they do if they were not already part of a logical space. And, if such objects do play a *criterial role*, then they ought not normally be held accountable to the standards which they set.

The rejection of the determinacy of sense, and the adoption of the right sort of idea of arbitrariness, frees us to use languages which we stipulate to have particular determinate prerequisites. The use of such determinate prerequisites constitutes an acceptable, non-metaphysical, form of using a scheme-content dichotomy. It does so because we are applying an artificial scheme to an already normative content, and we are doing so with a view to *describing* and not *explaining*. Filling out the overview of 2.5-2.6 has thus afforded us a way of talking about the applicability of concepts to the empirical world which does not fail in the same way as *transcendental idealism* does.

I have been using Wittgenstein's transition from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations* to illustrate a movement from a tacitly transcendental idealist picture to a picture which avoids the problems which motivate transcendental idealism. So to summarise the method I have endorsed, I want to take as a point of comparison Wittgenstein's description of the difference between his early and later work.

The preconceived idea of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination round. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need.) (PI 108)

The turn is away from the Tractarian thought that the project of philosophical analysis is a project of elucidating the 'crystalline purity' which must be inherent in natural language – the determinacy of its sense – by attending to how language is actually used, and using what is found as an immanent basis for transcendently establishing

language's essential nature. That is, away from the thought that,

[w]hat is needed is not an ideal language that replaces natural languages, but an ideal notation which brings out the underlying logical structure which sentences in the vernacular possessed all along. (Glock 2007; 39)

Once the turn is made, what, on the Tractarian picture, was thought to be the uncovering of a *natural* 'crystalline structure', in the hands of an investigator who takes themselves to be finding out about language's necessary structures by attending to natural language, comes to be seen as, the unwitting creation of an artificial language which is made artificial by the imposition of the presumption that language has an essential structure.

The methodological insight I have drawn from considering Wittgenstein's 'turn' is that turning to the second conception of investigating language in a way which does not undermine itself by assuming a notion of language's essential structure, requires a re-appropriation of the use of artificial languages. That is, we must retain the idea that we can use idealized languages to bring out the logic of sentences in the vernacular, but we ought not think that we can do so because sentences in the vernacular are part of a single 'crystalline structure'.

Instead of ousting artificial languages outright (a move which we have seen leads to a dogmatism of its own kind in the cases of Avital and Read), artificial languages must come to be viewed as a tool required *for* investigation by an ongoing process of comparison (a comparison between artificial languages and language as we use it) rather than as making perspicuous a mythical end *of* investigation – languages already 'crystalline structure'. That is, we describe what we do with language by creating simple language games – as Diamond did with her Susan-metre – and then putting them to work in order better to describe particular parts of the normative and modally structured multiplicity of world and language which we inhabit.

The methodological shift is this: instead of seeing ourselves as paying attention to the confused multiplicities of ordinary language in order to gain insight into language's true underlying crystalline form (that is, striving to represent used language's true



conceptual unity perspicuously), the investigation is turned into a project of using ideal languages (which are created by *stipulating a* conceptual unity) in order to bring into view part of the boundless modal and normative multiplicity of the world of which our language use is a spatial and temporal part.

The idea, then, is this: constitutive descriptions of simple languages are intransitive inasmuch as they are the inauguration of a set of internal relations. By inaugurating internal relations in this way, we employ “a definition in terms of necessary conditions” (Kuusela 2008; 182) with regard to a model of the object of our investigation, whilst refraining from demanding that for an object of investigation to fall under the concept we are interested in, it must meet those necessary conditions. In doing this, we deploy a non-dogmatic form of a scheme-content dichotomy: we stipulate the determinate prerequisites of an idealised model in order to create a point of comparison to the way in which we already do things.

My use of term 'Mythological', then, is intended to capture the sense in which we use necessarily incomplete idealisations in order to describe the modal nexus we inhabit. These idealisations have, at their bedrock, stipulations, or intransitive definitions, which, if taken to be themselves *representative* of the way whatever the object of investigation is, lead us to fall prey to the *use of super-pictures*. If we confuse features of the prerequisites of representation with features of what is represented we attribute to the world intrinsically normative properties. It is thus inappropriate to make claims about the truth or falsity of the prerequisites of such models. This is the sense in which,

in philosophy we often compare the use of words with games and calculi which have fixed rules, but cannot say that someone who is using language must be playing such a game.....this, however, can only appear in the right light when one has attained greater clarity about the concepts of understanding, meaning, and thinking. For it will then also become clear what can lead us (and did lead me) to think that if anyone utters a sentence and means or understands it he is operating a calculus according to definite rules. (PI 81)

In summary, the thought I want to uphold is this: prior to the possibility of there being rules which express what we do, there must be some sort of doing – a normatively and modally structured multiplicity which we exploit by appropriating parts of it into our

grammar. What I am terming 'mythological method' is the production of models of parts of the logical multiplicity we inhabit and what we do within it – a method constituted by our production of simple language games constituted by our stipulation of internal relations – which ought to be seen as objects of comparison. These objects of comparison, then, serve to both:

- Elucidate similarity: objects of comparison allow us to elucidate modal and normative relations within the multiplicity of relations we inhabit (such as the entailments and commitments a truth-functional analysis would show). Such elucidations then afford a way to isolate further features of our empirical situation as salient, and saliently related.
- Elucidate dissimilarity: objects of comparison allow us to elucidate ways in which idealisations are dissimilar to the roles the parts of our language games they represent play (such as the disanalogy between the role the standard metre-stick plays in our practices of measurement and the role it is described as playing by a truth-functional analysis).

If the second, as well as the first, function of deploying mythological language games is intelligible, we have a way of using particular cases to *show* that the very possibility of exhaustive description, or explanation of the prerequisites of sense is mythical; an idea that, if ignored, results in dogmatism – presuming that the stipulated features of objects of comparison must represent necessary features of the object of comparison. Such a confusion situates us within the circle of confusions which I described in the introduction (cf. p.11).

By recognising disanalogies between idealised languages and our practices, we have a method for coming to see that idealised languages are created by treating a criterion within a particular logical space as intrinsically normative. Inasmuch as we recognise the idealised language as a simplified model of what we normally do with language, we recognise the logical multiplicity of the idealised languages to be impoverished in relation to the multiplicity of that which they model. Objects of comparison thus allow us to see that a richer modal nexus than that exhibited by an idealised language is a prerequisite of any concept's application. Seeing that the modal nexus we inhabit

outstrips any particular object of comparison, then, shows that creating objects of comparison cannot yield an exhaustive description of the object of investigation. In order to be an object of comparison, that object must, in being formed by taking particular features of the modal nexus we inhabit to be criterial, miss out some aspects of the multiplicity we inhabit.

So, by taking some portion of what we do as foundational we can model particular features of 'how we go on' on as if they were ultimately essential. Doing so is valuable: we make explicit the accountability that is already implicit in concept use (and, more generally, what we do), and we then may use the outcome of this to recursively model further aspects of our worldly practices. Once we take this thought seriously we can accommodate the following sort of thought.

Following according to the rule is FUNDAMENTAL to our language-game. It characterises what we call description (RFM VI-28)

And we can accommodate the above sort of thought in a way which allows us to refrain from the destructive idea that we might exhaustively describe the 'bedrock' of our conceptual lives; the thought that we might provide an exhaustive explanation by completely representing the prerequisites of concept use. It is in this sense that,

...we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison— as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality must correspond. (PI 131)

What deploying what I am terming mythological method allows us to show, then, is the emptiness of dogmatically determinate characterisations of the prerequisites of our normative lives, not (contra Read) the emptiness of bedrock-talk itself.

What I have intended to present in this section is not a prescription for the execution of philosophical method; for I do not think there is any one such thing. Nor have I made a claim about how to adjudicate between correct and incorrect philosophical pictures; for to buy into the thought that there could be criteria for correctness for accounts of the prerequisites of concept use would be to make the confusion I have been warning

against. Rather, I have only been presenting a method for showing how, by starting from a case by case basis, totalising philosophical claims can be destructive to the endeavour of making sense of what we are doing when we normally assert that things are true or false. The use of philosophical pictures can be destructive in this way if that use commits us to treating the qualities *we* stipulate an object of comparison to have to be an essential feature of what we are investigating. For to do so is to invoke determinate prerequisite of sense of the kind which could not play a role within a normative context, and of the kind we find in the lineage of transcendental idealism.

This in no sense *demotes* what we do when philosophising to *merely* making comparisons between different ways of looking at the same thing. The comparison made by Diamond, for instance, allowed us both to stop using a way of looking at a thing on the grounds that that way of looking was obscuring the very thing we wanted to look at, and at the same time brought into view the role of criterial objects in particular contexts.

Also, it is important to note that none of what I have claimed stops sentences like 'if what Kripke asserts about the standard metre-stick is true, then what Wittgenstein asserts about the standard metre-stick is false' being true – it just pushes us to ask what the particular preconditions of that claim being found to be true or false are. As Diamond demonstrated, the particular preconditions which we would have to assume for Kripke's claim to be true, are destructive of the very possibility of sense.

To desire a more general way of thinking of truth and falsity than that which we glean from attending to what accord and discord with normative authorities amounts to in particular situations is to desire after the sort of totalising view of normative phenomena we have been at pains to avoid. A view which, in presuming that there must be sense to some determinate criteria of correctness which stand outside of the context for which they are criteria, presumes a metaphysical picture of the relation between normative force and normative authority. As we have seen such metaphysical pictures disconnects normative authorities from the contexts in which they have normative force.

In the next chapter I want to show how the stance we have developed in this thesis so

far can be applied to perhaps the most pernicious source of scheme-content dichotomies: the idea of the causal as opposed to the normative.

## **Chapter 5: Our Relation to Causes**

This chapter will present a short application of the description of the relation between norms and the world which I have developed in the thesis so far to the idea of causality and our relation to particular causes.

Part of the point of waiting until now to do so is to fill out the idea that the Kantian transcendental idealist posits an external relation between the normative realm and the realm of substance in a way which would have taken a substantial digression from the argument at various junctures in this thesis (in the Introduction, 1.32, and 3-3.11).

I am also presenting the account in this chapter as an extended conclusion to the thesis for the following reasons. The aim of this thesis has been to show that if we try to treat the empirical world as externally related to the norms which make it intelligible to us, then we inevitably disconnect normative authority from normative force. The Kantian transcendental idealist endeavoured to solve this problem by explaining how concepts are partly constitutive of the empirical world. However, the manner of this explanation is self-undermining because it reinstates the problem it intends to solve. This sort of self-undermining approach, I have argued, is hard to shake off, because it is a symptom of a deep problem in the philosophical methodology we have inherited. I have endeavoured to bring this point out in two ways:

1. Through a series of illustrations of symptoms of tacitly retaining some aspect of the transcendental idealist picture within accounts which are making an effort to jettison such a picture; cases where *either* despite the picturer's intentions, pictures of mind and world require for their cogency super-pictures or norms which are intelligible independently of their application; *or*, super-pictures and norms which are intelligible independently of their application are avoided by *explaining* how the realm of norms is autonomous using an appeal to a metaphysical picture which itself then serves as a problematic determinate prerequisite of sense (cf . 2.31-2.6, 3.1-3.33, 4-4.25).
2. Through showing that in each instance of a picturer retaining too much of the transcendental idealist picture, a variation upon a particular sort of confusion has been manifest. In misconstruing the role of objects of comparison within our everyday use of language (because of failing to fully shake-off the picture

of sense having determinate prerequisites), these objects of comparison have been cast as only being capable of playing the normative role they do if there is a criterion of correctness for their use which is a determinate prerequisite of this use.

Treatments of causality are a flashpoint for such confusions, because the opposition between causal relations and one sort of normative relation appears natural and obvious – being caused to have an experience does not justify one in believing that what one has experienced is true. If one does not draw the distinction between relations *between* logical spaces, and relations *within* logical spaces (as I did at 2.5-2.6, 4.25-4.3), then one runs together all relations between normatively structured objects and justificatory relations. If one thinks relations between normatively structured objects just are justificatory relations, then an account such as mine will, in being seen through the lens of this confusion, seem simply absurd.

Worse still, such a confusion may make the illicit metaphysical pictures of Sacks, Steiner, and Rorty, appear *necessary* because, given the presumption of the anormativity of causes, if one is to avoid a disconnection between normative authority and normative force by casting the realm of normativity as *autonomous* (*i.e.* externally related to the world), then one *has to oppose* norms to causes. If one is to make such an opposition, then one ought to justify it, and the only way to do so is via an appeal to a sort of *metaphysical* picture which disconnects normative force from normative authority. Views that result when this is done are destructive of the idea that parts of the natural world can be normative authorities, and we ought to take this fact at face value, because if we try to *explain* how we can, we buy back into the Kantian problematic.

To make this extended conclusion, then, I will make the following moves. I will describe how Kant did not *oppose* causes to norms, but nonetheless erred in attempting to explain this lack of opposition by way of a prior opposition between the categories and substance. Then I will show that we can preserve some of Kant's positive insights, and that, in doing so, we can show an idea of a realm of anormative substance to be *superfluous* – in the sense developed in the last three chapters – to the possibility of our causal concepts having content, and superfluous to that content also. This will serve to lay the ground for showing that causality is inherently normative in a way we ought

to take at face value (for if we do not take the normativity inherent in causality at face value, we buy back into the game of giving external explanations). Identifying what should count as a cause of which specific entity or event is dependent upon a wider modal and causal context which is normative in the way brought out in the football example examined at the very beginning of this thesis.

### **5.1 Framing**

In this section I will explicate a prerequisite of establishing that we do not have to appeal to anything outside of the logical space of causes to understand causes themselves. The prerequisite in question is that we can tell a story about the relation between our grasp of the primary/secondary quality distinction and our grasp of a notion of objectivity without appealing to a distinction between the intrinsic properties of things and the relational properties of things. I will explicate this by borrowing from Langton's recent discussion of Locke's and Kant's varying but related usage of the primary/secondary quality distinction (1998).

Langton's discussion is especially useful because she convincingly shows both how subtle mistakes concerning the status of secondary qualities can lead to confusions between epistemological and metaphysical issues, and how, if we do not run together secondary qualities and phenomenological qualities, we can read Kant as offering a way of thinking of instances of causality as objectively real, internally related to our receptivity to them, and internally related to a larger causal nexus.

Langton reads Kant as inheriting particular parts of a metaphysical picture from Locke: Locke makes a primary/secondary/tertiary distinction (henceforth the P/S/T distinction) between the intrinsic properties of objects, the causal powers of objects which we happen to be sensitive to, and the wider class of causal powers which objects objectively have irrespective of our sensitivities.

The point of casting the distinction like this is to emphasise that we ought not to read Locke as using the terms 'primary' and 'secondary' to draw a distinction between things as they are in themselves and Lockean ideas, or more generally, as a distinction between the scientific and manifest images. Rather, although Locke's secondary properties are individuated according to our sensitivity to them, they are not



metaphysically dependent upon our sensitivity to them; they are special cases of the objective tertiary properties of objects – ones which always have humans as a relata. Given, then, the objective status of all of the elements of Locke's P/S/T distinction – because the distinction is primarily metaphysical – we ought to ask what the relations between each element are. With regards to S/T, it seems clear that the distinction is metaphysically arbitrary: in as much as S is a subset of T, the two are of the same kind, and are distinguishable only by way of contingent facts about the sorts of things we are.

The difference between P and S/T, however, is more substantial: as we have seen it is a distinction *within* the scientific image,

Powers, like primary qualities, are in an object 'whether we perceive them or no'; yet, Locke thinks, they are not in the object 'as it is in itself'. This means there is a sense in which a property can fail to be in a thing 'as it is in itself' for reasons other than its perceiver dependence. (Langton 1998; 149)

So there is an ontological separation here: as well as the object 'as it is in itself' there are also powers, and, in being perceiver independent, both are of equal interest to natural science. Further, as “there is a sense in which a property can fail to be in a thing 'as it is in itself'”, the metaphysical question of how powers relate to the objects as they are in themselves becomes pertinent.

What is the sense in which objects can fail to possess a power? The thought is that the primary properties are the original qualities of an object – those qualities such that

a thing can have them whether or not there is anything else around (*op. cit.*; 153)

Such properties are thus intrinsic properties. On the other hand powers are essentially relational: to be realised there must be more than one intrinsic property on the scene. Thus, importantly, primary properties are a metaphysical bedrock; without such properties there would be no relations between substances, and so, no powers.

Now that the P/T distinction has been recast as an intrinsic/relational distinction, we can say a little more about the nature of the relation between the two ontological categories. The relation is modally free, *i.e.* external, as Locke, like Kant, held that

no matter how many substances God cares to create, mere addition of substances with their intrinsic properties will never endow the substances with their relations, or powers to relate (*op.cit.*;122-123)

That is, relational properties are superadded to intrinsic properties. We might put this thesis in terms of possible worlds:

Could God have made a world of substances with the very same intrinsic properties that substances have in our world, and yet have made the world with different laws – or no laws at all – governing the dynamical relations of substances? (*op. cit.*; 119)

On Locke's picture the answer is clearly 'yes', and so

the powers of things do not supervene on the intrinsic properties of things. Since what matters is not how many things there are, but what laws there are. (*ibid*).

Given that the two ontological categories are thought to be externally related – *i.e.* not logically related – and we are only privy to facts about one of the relata, then no set of facts about the results of those laws can tell us anything about the intrinsic nature of objects. This stance creates an epistemological mystery for Locke: how might we have knowledge of intrinsic properties at all?

The innovation Langton now makes is to use the above separation to show that Kant's categories allow him a position which suffers neither from the ills of phenomenalism nor from the epistemological mystery surrounding how we relate to intrinsic properties. For, although Kant inherits the distinction between intrinsic properties and relational properties from Locke, he does not use the term 'primary' as a label for intrinsic properties. Rather, he inherits the use of the term 'primary' as a label for whatever “properties [are] ascribed to bodies by science” (*op. cit.*; 156).

Now, Kant differs from Locke as regards the reach of scientific enquiry: whereas for Locke both primary (intrinsic) and tertiary (relational) qualities are the objective aim of scientific enquiry, for Kant intrinsic properties are a transcendental requirement for the possibility of scientific investigation – for there must be a substrata if there are to be relations – and so cannot themselves be an object of scientific enquiry. So, to interpret charitably Kant's talk of primary qualities, we should take them to be the properties Locke describes as tertiary. That is, when Kant talks of primary qualities he is not including talk of anything intrinsic, but rather is talking of the causal powers of objects: the capacity of objects to effect change in other objects which are only capable of being individuated by observing their place within a network of such changes.

The grounds for attributing this interpretation to Kant's use of 'primary qualities' is the superfluity of intrinsic properties in relation to the content of scientific claims. Scientific enquiry gives us criteria of individuation for empirical entities by charting the circumstances in which they change and in which they do not change by holding some dispositions fixed in order to note the variance in others. Likewise, for Kant, the only way in which we are receptive to the world of objects is through being a part of the same causal order *and* through being able to be receptive to effects in such a way as to perform an implicit analogue of scientific enquiry. We are sensitive to ourselves as a locus of the causal order inasmuch as we can take it that changes we undergo are part of a wider modal order encompassing these changes. In this regard, we need to be aware that there is a wider modal order – a point which will become very important when discussing Strawson and Evans, below.

So, for Langton's Kant, if something is not part of the causal order, it cannot be an object of scientific enquiry. Nor can it be intelligible to our receptivity. Furthermore, intrinsic properties cannot be part of the causal order. Thus, "Humility ... follow[s] from Receptivity given Irreducibility" (*op. cit.*; 127). Given that we cannot be in direct contact with intrinsic properties, and that intrinsic properties are externally related to laws and so cannot be got at through a reduction, we ought to admit that we can know nothing of them. I share this thought to a degree, and much of the current chapter will concern the relation between the irreducibility and receptivity claims. If we are to make sense of receptivity at all, we have to take causal powers and our experience of them to

be internally related. However, the consequence of this is that the application of the idea of humility presumes too much: if we can find no possible role for intrinsic properties to play in our notion of cause, and in causes *per se*, we should not presume to think that talk of the intrinsic properties of things makes sense at all. Intrinsic properties are, in the idiom of chapter 2, not part of the same logical space as empirical statements and their grounds; they are thus, sense-wise, *superfluous*.

Thus, I diverge from Langton's Kant at the making of what I think is a persistent and pernicious assumption: that an object's intrinsic properties and their powers are externally related. I will return to the assumption in more detail below. For now, though, to bring out the way in which I *agree* with Langton's Kant, and to embellish the connection between modal sensitivity and empirical thought, I want to look at Langton's application of this position to a more contemporary Kantian debate.

## **5.2 Strawson, Evans and Space**

Seeing Kant as using the primary/secondary quality distinction to distinguish between the class of causal powers of objects and the class of causal powers we are receptive to allows Langton to clarify some issues in the literature surrounding Strawson's *Individuals* (1964). Strawson there made a case for the dependency of our concept of objectivity upon a notion of space, or something which plays the role space plays for us. For our purposes it is sufficient to say that the role the analogue of space played in Strawson's argument was to provide a system of reference which allowed agents to reidentify qualitative episodes as the same qualitative episode as before, by attaching a unique quality to those episodes.

Evans responded by showing that the notion of space at play in Strawson's argument "beg[s] the question in a subtle but decisive way" (Evans 1985: 259). The thought is this: objectivity is dependent upon the possibility of re-identification, and re-identification relies on distinguishing between types and tokens. (If we could not do so then we may well be either counting the same thing as many different things, or counting many things of the same type as a single thing.) To distinguish types from tokens we must be able to differentiate more than one thing of the same type, and to be able to perform such a differentiation we need to be able to give sense to the thought

that two such tokens can exist simultaneously. According to Evans, Strawson's analogue of space is not capable of providing us with the information required to give sense to the thought that two tokens of the same type can exist simultaneously, for attaching a further quality to a qualitative episode merely creates a new qualitative experience.

By Evans' lights, experience of space in which two things of the same type can exist simultaneously is still not sufficient grounds for a concept of objectivity. For it only provides us with an array of structured information rather than supplying grounds for individuating that information in one way rather than another. In order to associate observational information appropriately, a grasp of the primary/secondary distinction is needed, insofar as, in distinguishing between events in our biography and events *per se*, we must already see the events of our mental lives as grounded by something which outstrips those particular mental episodes. If we did not have this prior conceptual apparatus there would be nothing to our experience other than its phenomenal character, and if the phenomenal character is exhausted by the sensation produced within us by a certain stimuli, then we would be stuck with Strawson's initial problem: we would have no grounds upon which to distinguish re-encountering an individual from the recurrence of a subjective mental state.

Evans nicely captured the picture he intended the primary/secondary quality distinction to be a supplement to by way of the following analogy:

There is a group of currencies actively traded against the others in a situation of floating exchange rates. The basic propositions for describing this system will be of the form '£1 = \$1.75 at the end of ... days trading'. But we can imagine the description enriched by the introduction of the idea of the value of the £. (*op. cit.*; 115)

If this is all there is to the pound, and the value of the pound is analogous to spatial properties of objects, Evans claims that it is plain to see that the spatial properties are reducible to mere relations. What is needed by Evans' lights is a prior grounding for the analogue of the value of the pound – a sort of gold standard.

Evans claims that there are only two places to look if one wants to find the grounds of conditional claims: to a regular experience of such conditionals, or to some categorical (by which he means *intrinsic*) grounds for that conditional. He decides upon the second option, roughly, because to experience something regularly is not to experience a regularity *as* a regularity – presuming that it is begs the question. Because we have considered such problems in chapter 2 (cf. 2.3-2.32), and because I want to get to a third option – which Evans omits – I will not dwell on the details of Evans' choice. The third option is the line Langton's Kant takes: the objective grounds of the object's propensity to produce events with a certain phenomenal character are further dispositions.

What Langton's Kant allows us to see is that the third option is a live one because – as intrinsic properties are radically inaccessible to empirical agents – intrinsic properties cannot themselves be prerequisites for a notion of objectivity (they are, as we have seen in the case of private sensations and other super-pictures, normatively inert (cf. 4.11)). Rather, the idea of intrinsic properties is, if cogent at all, a transcendental leap away from the immanent objective experience of objects within the phenomenal world.

Evans missed this by conflating the fact that the effects of objects' secondary properties upon us are exhausted by a description of their phenomenal character with the assumption that the grounds of the effects of secondary properties are exhausted by phenomenal character. Thus he aligned the dispositional with the realm of appearance and the intrinsic with the objective.

It would have been all the better for Evans' account if he had not made this conflation: the conflation does not lend his account any substance, and in fact leads to its downfall. We can see this by looking at the seemingly insurmountable final challenge which holding to this conflation produces. If we conflate notions of objectivity with notions of intrinsic properties, and assume we have to account for our notion of objectivity, then the following question must be answered: 'Add as much conceptual apparatus into the picture as you like, if all the conceptual apparatus can do is deal with the secondary and tertiary qualities (both thought of as subject-dependent) by giving a more general conditional under which they fall, how can we ever discern anything truly objective (which under this use of 'objective' means intrinsic)?'.

If, however, dispositions/tertiary properties have an objective existence, then we do not face such a challenge. If we do not face such a challenge then its insurmountability cannot be capitalised upon in the way available to relationalists like John Campbell. Campbell (2002) argues that nothing short of perceptual contact with the categorical/intrinsic properties of objects would be sufficient to explain our possession of the notion of objectivity. For, if all we are ever presented with are qualities which are secondary and thus subject dependent, we have no way of accounting for the information which would ground our possession of the notion of mind independence.

The anti-representational motivation for relationalism – where the relation is to the categorical properties of objects conceived of as intrinsic properties – is then, if Langton's Kant is right, lost: Kantian Humility does not entail a representationalism as Campbell conceives of it because the effect of the causal powers of objects upon us are not claimed to produce experiences with content which outstrips those causal powers. The Receptive agent is sensitive to the very causal powers which effect her, and the objects of her experience are the phenomenal objects which are thoroughly exhausted by tertiary properties. Nothing unreachable is being represented because a grasp of causal properties does not require a grasp of intrinsic (non-relational) properties.

Before we move on to talk about the positive aspects of Evans' account, I want to draw attention to the similarity between the issue at hand and that which I examined in chapter 2. I want to do so to make a start toward showing that the current problem is yet another version of the rule-following paradox. The problem Evans found in Strawson could be put like this: 'what makes it appropriate to associate a given set of of qualitative episodes of a subject?'; that is, why ought we see one effect upon us as appropriately connected to other effects. Evans' and Campbell's solutions are similar solutions in that they each take up a different horn of the dilemma that considering rule-following poses to those looking to explain such associations. Campbell locates the required grounding in the objects themselves; Evans locates the required grounding it in our innate capacities. The more satisfying solution is, I take it, to reject the picture which makes such a grounding seem necessary – that is, a picture upon which the grounds and the experience are not externally related. I hope to show this much in the rest of the current chapter.

### **5.21 Primitive Mechanics**

The intention behind showing how Langton's clarification reflected upon the debate surrounding Strawson's *Individuals* is to reinvigorate that debate as part of a descriptive project which seeks to conduct itself without anything transcendent. The thought is that once we have explained away the realist anxiety that primary properties must be intrinsic, and the realist conviction that we must have contact with them in order to ground our notion of objectivity, we can hold to the following claim:

To grasp these primary [or tertiary, once reinterpreted] properties, one must master a set of interconnected principles which make up an elementary theory - of primitive mechanics - into which these properties fit, and which alone gives them sense. One must grasp the idea of a unitary spatial framework in which both oneself and the bodies of which one has experience have a place, and through which they move continuously. One must learn of the conservation of matter in different shapes, of the identity of matter perceived from different points of view and through different modalities, and of the persistence of matter through gaps in observation. One must learn how bodies compete for the occupancy of positions in space, and of the resistance one body may afford to the motion of another. And so on. (Evans 1985: 269)

And we must do so without the fear that we are providing, as it were, a syntax of our concept of objective space-occupying-stuff which ultimately lacks a semantics. That is, if dispositions are real and do not require grounding, the question 'what gives content to our thought about objective lynchpins which are external to the realm of causal relations?' no longer needs to be asked.

I want to bring a little more out of the claim that we can make the move described above – making an internal description of our conception of objective objects – by merely showing that there must be a reciprocal relationship between any one disposition and a wider array of dispositions. For properly describing this relationship allows us to see that, if we accept that causal powers are irreducible, there is an unproblematic way of buying into Evans' claim that

expressions referring to 'places' [have] identity conditions [which] are tied to a whole network of propositions...but to no one taken individually (1985; 288)



– For being involved in such a reciprocal relationship already provides us with all we need to make sense of the objectivity of dispositions. So we do not need to accommodate within our account a theoretical conception of intrinsic properties as things which stand behind a set of dispositions and ground them, but we can never directly know. (That is, we do not need to accept into our account a notion of intrinsic properties which privileges normative force in the problematic way first pointed out at 1.32).

By looking back over chapters 3 and 4, we can see that if such a reciprocal picture seems mysterious, its seeming mystery ensues from the sort of mis-picturing of conceptual bedrock discussed in relation to Williams, Rorty (3.3-3.4), and Read (4.13). It seems mysterious because one has already bought into the idea of absolute objectivity as being guaranteed by an appeal to the intrinsic underpinnings of a causal nexus. And such an appeal presumes an unwarranted assumption of an ineffable determinate prerequisite of sense (4).

We can show this much by:

- on the one hand, examining how attempts to ground the norms which enable our experience of the causal properties of *space occupying stuff* in some acausal standard fails in the same way as all the other attempts to draw normative authority from an anormative source have (cf. 1 and 2) – an aim which I will meet by examining pictures of causality which feature intrinsic properties as such standards in 5.3 - 5.33.
- on the other hand, making clear that if we allow ourselves only resources which are internal to the reciprocal relation between particular causes and a wider causal and modal nexus, we have as full a notion of objectivity as we need to make sense of the objectivity needed for claims about particular causes – I will outline this thought now.

## **5.22 Reciprocation**

In chapter 2 I showed that, to make sense of the content of an experience of a visual scene presenting space-occupying-stuff as space-occupying-stuff, one had to be able to

associate the aspects of objects seen from the present point of view with an array of possible aspects seen from different points of view (cf .2.2-2.3). If this is true, then the immediate grounds for any particular apprehension of space-occupying-stuff must just be further relations. For what allows us to make sense of one point of view upon a scene as a scene in a spatial arena is the compatibility of the scene visible from the present point of view with actual and possible scenes viewed from other positions, and the same conditions hold for these scenes which might be viewed from other positions.

Evans' worry about phenomenal reduction could now be put in terms of the modal structure all of these sorts of relations constitute. That is, we have an idea of an aspect of some space-occupying- stuff having to sit amidst a nexus constituted by a community of its own kind (cf. 2.2-2.21, 4.25) but this is a *mere* network of relations, and so can only serve as an analogue of the sort of idea of space which Evans showed needs to be supplemented with a theory of primitive mechanics.

In Chapter 2, to make sense of how appealing to a notion of space constituted by these sorts of relations could give content to a concept of a spatially unified object which we would need to experience-space-occupying stuff as space-occupying-stuff, I introduced the idea that inherent in the sensitivity to very general internal relations between aspects of space-occupying-stuff is a sort of indeterminacy (one which a proponent of a dispositional account of our ability to appropriately associate aspects of objects could not cope with). In other words, as we saw with the case of the football in Chapter 1, once some criteria set the standard for what is strongly internally related to what within a logical space, weak internal relations articulate an array of possible networks of actual modal relations (cf. 1.1-1.2). Many different possibilities, then, could satisfy the norms which articulate which internal relations are implicated in the individuation of space-occupying-stuff.

What I am presently intending to emphasise about the role of indeterminacy in the experience of an aspect of space-occupying-stuff as space-occupying-stuff is that it is *constitutive* of the experience of an aspect of space-occupying-stuff as objective. Without allowing for such determinacy we would divest a description of our perceptual experience of the normativity which is constitutive of its content; we would be left with a picture of experience of space-occupying-stuff as comprised of independently

intelligible dispositions and disembodied norms (cf. 2.1-2.4). So, for an aspect of an object to be visually present to a subject as such, it *must* be that the aspect is presented as bearing indeterminate, though modally constrained, relations to other aspects. If this information were not present then we simply would not be experiencing an aspect of space-occupying-stuff as objective.

Appreciating this indeterminacy, I also argued, serves as a prerequisite of a sensitivity to the at once more specific and more contingent relations which articulate what it is to be a sort of thing which falls under the wider sortal of space-occupying-stuff (cf. 2.2-2.3). We thus arrived at this image: relations which are to be counted as internal to the capacity of identifying space-occupying-stuff provide a framework upon which other accidental relations can be realised. Objects individuated by recourse to these accidental relations can then stand as criteria for identifying relations internal to a more particular logical space (cf. 2.2-2.3). This is one particular way in which internal relations are a prerequisite of external relations.

A notion of possible causal relations outstrips causal relations which we are at any given point privy to, and, I am likewise claiming, goes hand in hand with the separation between tertiary and secondary properties. In having an appreciation of the possible multitude of different ways things could be from the way we expect, we have the resources to appreciate that there may be ways an object is of which we do not know. Furthermore, the very possibility of experiencing any disposition at all is dependent upon our appreciation of the particular ways it may be associated with other dispositions.

We can enrich our appreciation of the causal nexus we inhabit *as* a causal nexus (which is different from just being aware of the causal nexus in itself), then, by describing our engagement with it by empirical method (1.51-1.6). A prerequisite of deploying such a method is already being rule-followers which we having seen to involve the capacity to make the sort of novel extension of perceptual norms I characterised at 2.2, and to to attribute properties to the modal nexus we inhabit by holding parts of it fixed and varying others (1.51-1.56): we treat things which are part of a modal and normative landscape we already inhabit as criteria in order to continually assess and determine what is internally related to what, and to discover external relations.

The resources an agent needs in order to gain an appreciation of the capacity for causal powers of objects (Kant's tertiary qualities) to outstrip our knowledge of them is, then, something like this:

- for a sensitivity to objective dispositions to be realised, the normative ability to isolate a particular power of an object is required; if this ability is to be realised we must be able both to hold fixed a power's relation to an array of related powers – for the sorts of reasons Kant gave when making a case for tertiary properties being the object of science – and to have the ability to accommodate novel extensions of the array of related powers.

If we have allowed this much then we already have allowed that we have an awareness of a modal structure which outstrips our immediate apprehension; and so, we already have accounted for something which plays the objectivity-giving role of Evans' primary properties. And we have done so without positing possession of a concept of something which is radically inaccessible to any subject. As such, the causal powers of an object need not be thought to be experienced as unified in virtue of a *theory* about their intrinsic grounds; the unity falls out of the internal relation between the nexus of causal powers which must – if we are to appreciate any one causal power as a causal power of some *space occupying stuff* – be appreciated to outstrip the part of the modal nexus we are presently aware of.

Thus, a similar move to the Kantian move is being made here: mysterious primary properties are being replaced with objective tertiary properties constituted by the internal relations between aspects of the environment we inhabit.

So we have re-encountered the same sort of question as we did in chapter 2 – what makes it appropriate to associate experiences of aspects of *space occupying stuff* – and can now retrace the steps between chapters 2 and 4 to see that the question of what *grounds* the association is not as problematic as it might seem.

Once the particular mode of dependence argued for in chapter 2 is realised, we also must accept that the immediate experience of some causal power (my analogue of

Evans' secondary properties) is unintelligible unless its content is the occupation of a place in an interwoven network of synchronically and diachronically related causal powers. The content of a present experience is only present *as* content in virtue of being experienced as holding a place in a network of causal powers where the network is constituted by other causal powers. Inasmuch as the dependence is symmetrical in the case of both spatial and causal properties, the characterisation of secondary properties offered by Evans –

For an object to have [a secondary property] is for it to be such that, if certain beings were suitably situated, they would be affected with certain experiences (1985; 268-269)

– is unavailable in separation from the notion of an objective network of properties (in the sense of a network which outstripping our awareness). So the very idea of the worrying phenomenal reduction is unintelligible – it digs below bedrock.

Thus, I suggest that we can recast Evans' primary/secondary distinction as an interplay between the placing of an experience within a network of experiences, and the network of experiences being re-informed by such placings (cf. 2, particularly 2.6). The upshot of doing so is that the idea of a primitive mechanics as a conceptual prerequisite of empirical experience is maintained in a way which does not instantiate a problematic relation between normative force and normative authority by opposing the theoretical abilities of the perceiver to the merely causal (anormative) experience of empirical qualities. We can encompass the core of Evans' insight – that it cannot be the case that being in perceptual contact with an anormative quality can put us in a position to be able to cognise it<sup>35</sup> – by on the one hand describing primitive mechanics as our ability to appreciate and exploit our place within a network of normative and modal relations; and on the other hand by describing perceptual contact with primary qualities as contact with something always already modally and normatively structured.

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Which is the same sort of idea as I expressed as the modal myth of the given 1.51, and as a problem for the simple dualist 2.31.

### **5.23 Summary**

What is distinctive about the claim about the relation of intrinsic properties and causal powers given Kantian Humility is its weakness: it is not a supervenience claim to the effect that the powers of the object result from the intrinsic properties of objects. It is rather just to claim that the existence of substance is a prerequisite of the existence of powers; that

substance which has [a] power must have some intrinsic property or other if it is to be a substance at all (Langton 1998; 175).

It is in this sense that the role of intrinsic properties in Langton's Kant's picture is different from the role of intrinsic properties in Evans' picture. On Kant's picture we move to an appreciation of intrinsic properties by arguing that the concept of objectivity we already have must depend upon an intrinsic substrata, but that the concept is not given content by this dependence. On Evans' picture we possess a concept of objectivity because we deploy a theoretical notion of intrinsic properties which cannot be directly observed in imminent experience. From the two claims and their comparison I would like to retain the idea that a concept of objectivity does not depend upon an idea of intrinsic properties for its content, and that what might make one think that there is such a dependence is a confusion of the sort which Langton's Kant avoids.

My view, then, is not Kant's; my view is that we can take Kant's claims about the objectivity of dispositions, and, in the manner of chapters 3 and 4, reject the idea that there is a story to tell, or justification to give, regarding why such dispositions are intelligible to us. To make this clear I want to situate Kant's causal powers view within a wider landscape of views pertaining to the truth-makers of particular causal statements and distinguish my view from Kant's.

### **5.3 Truth-makers for Causal statements**

On a Humean or Neo-Humean view there is no such thing as a necessary connection to be found in nature. Nature is comprised of the occupants of some basic metaphysical

class – for instance, objects, events, or facts – which have “loose and separate” (Hume; *EHU* 74) existences. Their existences are loose and separate inasmuch as there is nothing in the totality of intrinsic facts about the occupants of the basic metaphysical category which explains why some of that category regularly follow others of that category. Thus causal facts are always retrospective, in the following sense: they are made true by an operation ranging over the way things happen to have been. Or, more precisely for the neo-Humean, they are grounded in regularities across space and time in this and in other similar possible worlds, where similar possible worlds are similar both in respect of the laws of nature, and of their constituents.

The Nomocist, by contrast, claims that we must admit more than loose and separate existents into our ontology in order to account for the content of our causal talk, and has a stock of examples to show why. For instance, differentiating causal phenomena from pseudo-causal phenomena, the Nomocist would claim, is impossible if our only resource is mere regularity, for regularity is characteristic of both phenomena. The required extra criterion is gained by positing a universal which necessitates A following B in this possible world. Of that universal we can then either say that:

- It has to be the case in every possible world;
- It has to be the case in this possible world, but could be different in other possible worlds.

And then for each of those options we can say that,

- The universal relation supervenes upon the intrinsic properties of objects (i.e the universal could not have been the same if the intrinsic properties of the objects differed);
- The universal relation is somehow dependent on, but extra to the intrinsic properties of objects (i.e. there could have been a possible world with different intrinsic properties and the same observable regularities);
- The universal is directly grounded by the intrinsic properties of objects inasmuch as objects have as properties causal powers.

This last option presents an overlap between the Nomocist position and a causal-powers theory of causality. The powers theorists hold that causal powers are real, and that they are not separate from objects – causal powers are properties of objects intelligible prior to the appeal to a universal; the properties, not the universals, are the truth-makers. The truth of the universal claims fall out of the truth-making work of the properties. One way to think of the powers of these objects is to take issue with the Humean negative ontological claim concerning the unintelligibility of necessary connections in nature. Another way is to grant the Humean claim, but deny that we need to think of causes as necessary connections at all.

There is, though, further room for divergence within the causal powers position concerning how we characterise objects as having causal powers. We have so far ascertained that one can be a causal powers theorist by asserting that the causal power is grounded in the intrinsic property of the object. Another way is to eschew the idea of intrinsic properties providing a grounding by either adopting a position akin to Langton's Kant, or by dropping the idea of intrinsic properties altogether and claiming that an object is – under a very particular understanding of causal – nothing more than a set of causal powers.

As I said at 5.23, I think we should take the second option. We should take this option because if we do not, then we will fall foul of the problems which in chapters 1 to 4 we saw to afflict transcendental idealism widely construed, namely of transgressing the bounds of sense in order to secure the sense of our everyday talk of the world, or of limiting sense to a particular domain whilst still taking talk which refers to what lies outside of that domain to be intelligible.

The particular worry in this case is that if we believe that there must be intrinsic properties, that these properties are in some sense related to causal powers, and that

...any conceivable improvement in science will give us only a better pattern of dispositions and powers. That's the way physics works . . . (Blackburn 1990; p253)

(– And we believe Blackburn because, for the sort of Kantian reasons explicated earlier in this chapter,



...if we look at the properties of physical objects that physicists are prepared to allow them ... these show a distressing tendency to dissolve into relations one object has to another. (Armstrong 1968; 74) )

– Then it follows that we must either accept occult non-physical properties which play a mysterious grounding role of which we can never know (or at least can only know by observing how causal powers are associated – which is just as problematic because it is knowledge of intrinsic properties which was meant to allow for the observation of causal powers); or we must, with Langton's Kant, allow for intrinsic properties which play no grounding role, and thus are *superfluous* to our normative lives.

The causal powers view which I advocate can avoid the onus of accounting for the relation between truth-maker of causal claims and causal claims themselves. On a proper account of causal powers the relation between causality and talk of causality is internal, and thus not a candidate for further analysis, so the requirement for the provision of objectivity by a relation to ungraspable intrinsic properties is vanquished.

One may, however, still think that causal powers are themselves intrinsic properties; this is a view I would like to distinguish from my own for reasons to be given below, at and after 5.31 (and the sorts of reasons I gave at 4.1-4.12 for not talking of anything as being intrinsically normative). So, I will call the way of treating causal powers I have been endorsing *the causal powers view* (CPV)– the view that we need to appeal to nothing more than the place of a causal power within a nexus of causal powers to understand a causal power, and, further, that thinking of causes in this way obviates talk of *intrinsic* causal powers. To distinguish my view from theories which seek to explain causal powers by relating them to intrinsic properties which are not causal, or by taking causal powers to be *sui generis* intrinsic properties, let us call these latter views *causal powers theories* (CPT).

Thus, within the causality debate, I think the CPV occupies a novel position: whilst the Humean position and the Nomocist position (in one way and another) draw their substance from a debate about how to think of the relation between intrinsic and extrinsic properties, the view of the causal powers on which intrinsic properties are not appealed to – CPV – need not.

My interest now is to delineate some of the unwarranted assumptions which motivate the bad debate surrounding the relation between intrinsic properties and causes in order to show more fully: a) how the powers view need not engage with it; and b) how talk of causal powers has substance when considered apart from the debate.

### **5.31 A Shared Problem**

I now want to describe the common ground upon which the positions in the causality debate which I eschew lie. To do so I want to examine the similar way in which perceptual experience of causing, and the ability to grasp novel causings as causings, are treated by some Humeans and Nomocists. I then want to trace this back to a presumption about how we must relate to the intrinsic properties of objects – which is a problem of the same form as that which we found when examining Dualism in chapter 2 (cf. 2.11 for an overview ).

To make a start, I want to look at an assumption which looked to certain adherents of the Nomocist and Humean camp both to be a necessity and to have ramifications for how we think of perceptual experience. I then want to show how even though descendants of each line of thought recognise in turn that the ramifications do not follow, the picture which made the former claims look natural still has not been escaped.

Anscombe (1971) pointed out that some of the early advocates of cause as a necessary connection, and some of the advocates of cause as an exceptionless generalisation, take the following two commitments to hang together naturally:

- ‘If an effect occurs in one case and a similar effect does not occur in an apparently similar case, there must be a relevant further difference’ (*op. cit.*; p.1)
- Particular instances of causality can not be observed directly.

The first commonality is an expression of commitment to a relation between cause and effect which guarantees that, given a particular cause, a particular effect must follow. The difference between the believer in necessary connection and the believer in

exceptionless generalisations is that whilst for the former the 'must' has its force because of the existence of necessary connections in nature, the latter explains away the need for a metaphysical commitment by treating the 'must' as merely conceptual: it is a qualifying criterion for the attribution of cause that a B follows an A in all cases, otherwise it is simply not a case of causality that we are talking about. It is in this sense that stating an instance of a causing to be “an object, followed by another, and where all objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second” (Hume; EHU, 76) is to express a criterion of causality, rather than to identify a symptom.

Thus, for the Humean the appearance of necessity is a product of the scheme rather than the content; observation of constant conjunction increases the likelihood of the satisfaction of an exceptionless generalisation; and in reciprocation, causes and effects are individuated as conjoined because of the inescapability of the use of the idea of such necessary connections in making the empirical world intelligible to us. As the inescapability of the use of the idea adds nothing to its justification, we cannot make inferences about the nature of cause which stretch any further than our conceptual scheme: the Humean is in this way committed to a genre of antirealism about causality.

For our purposes, the key point in the above two paragraphs is that, either way, realist or antirealist, the effect of holding to the first commitment is the tacit acceptance of a picture upon which making sense of causal phenomena depends upon an appeal to something external to the intrinsic properties of the causing state and the effected state: for the Nomocist it is the universal (however realised) which associates the intrinsic properties of the cause and effect; whilst, for the Humean, it is the array of impressions (or whatever analogue of impressions is preferred) “drawn from objects foreign to the cause” (Hume; T 1.3.14) by which a subject has been conditioned to expect an A after a B.

Requiring that the sense of causal talk depends upon something external to any one instance of causing would seem to commit the sharers of the first common assumption to holding the second presumption.<sup>36</sup> Both exceptionless generalisations and necessary

<sup>36</sup> Davidson seems to avoid this problem in claiming that we do observe particular causes, but that they are causes because they are instances of a general rule, and we are caused to experience them as such. I take this view to be a version of the modal myth of the given (cf. 1.51) and so to fail at a level similar to Rorty's picture of merely causal information finding a place within our normative practices (cf. 3.33), but I have not got the space to discuss this view here.

connections outstrip any given instance; so, if we take the observable to be just that which we can glean evidence for from a given sensory instance, direct observation of causality looks to be out of the question.

What adds to the seeming naturalness of the assumptions is that holding to the second presumption would, at the very least, incline one toward accepting the first presumption: if a discrete instance of observation does not give criteria for individuating a cause and an effect as related (which, if we buy into the idea of loose and separate existents, seems intuitive), and we still want our talk of such things to be cogent, we might feel pushed to look for some other source to provide the missing information. The Nomocist points to the reality of necessary relations, whilst the Humean points to a necessary feature of our conceptual scheme.

Hume's argument for the potential unreality of cause can, in this way, be seen as exploiting a concern about how real necessary relations could ever possibly be truth-makers for causal statements. If we can never point to the particular necessary relation the Nomocist posits, it seems mysterious that we should have the capacity to make any claim about the existence of such connections. This is not just because of a scepticism about existence claims concerning unverifiable entities but, rather, because of the impossibility of something which cannot be observed contributing to the sense of thoughts with content. The thought is that the idea of real causal relations is superfluous with regards to an explanation of what we mean when we talk of causings. The remedy is to solve the problem of access by conceiving of the content of causal relations as completely internal to our scheme.

It is not altogether clear, however, that the Humean commands all of the exploitative leverage here. For the idea of a groundless exceptionless generalisation looks to present a challenge to the Humean. Taking causality as a particular sort of modality, the causal realist may paraphrase the modal-realist claim Brandom (2010) makes and say that:

[the Humean merely] makes claims about what one is doing in using [causal] concepts, whilst [causal] realism ... makes claims about what one is saying by using causal concepts. [The Humean] says that what one is doing when one makes a [causal] claim is endorsing an inference relating descriptive concepts as subjunctively (including

counterfactually) robust, or treating two descriptive concepts as incompatible. [The causal realist] says that when one does that, one is claiming that possession or exhibition of one empirical property is a consequence of, or is incompatible with, possession or exhibition of another. (2010; 32)

This, in effect, threatens to turn the tables upon the Humean by showing that if the exceptionless generalisation does not reach out beyond the conceptual scheme of the experiencer, then it too, within the Humean picture, is *equally problematic* because, if there is no contact with objective constraints upon causal utterances, we are in a familiar position: trading the normative authority of claims about what causes what for a more robust account of normative force.

Obviously, there are lots of moves internal to this debate which I am passing over: the Humean can, as I have, appeal to the superfluity of an entity to which we have no access, whilst the Nomocist, or any other sort of realist about causal relations, can dispute the claim of superfluity by appealing to cases involving finks and pre-emption.

<sup>37</sup> What I want to focus on from the discussion so far is that the assumptions which seemed natural to certain causal theorists have here created a familiar tension. The tension is between allowing that parts of the world can serve as the criteria of our thoughts, and allowing for a description of thought which can connect with such criteria. The tension, in other words, is a tension between accounting for normative force and allowing access to an appropriate normative authority.

We saw in the case of descriptive language (cf. 1.43) and perception of unified spatial objects (cf. 2) that where the norms involved in each sort of case were being deployed in a novel way there were particularly strong exemplifications of problems concerning the disconnection of normative force and normative authority. I now want to draw attention to the fact that the same is true for our experience of particular causings.

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<sup>37</sup> In cases of preemption effects are overdetermined by potential causes in a way which makes the counterfactual analysis of that causing, 'if x had not have happened, then y would not have happened', false for cases where it is intuitive that x did cause y. Finks are properties which mask dispositions that an object would have in their absence; thus finks create situations where an object has a causal power, but, as it is never realised, a counterfactual account cannot capture it.

### **5.32 Novel Causal Notions**

How, then, ought we to make sense of novel applications of causal concepts?

Anscombe claims that,

[t]he truthful—though unhelpful—answer to the question: "how did we come by our primary knowledge of causality?" is that in learning to speak we learned the linguistic representation and application of a host of causal concepts. Very many of them were represented by transitive and other verbs of action used in reporting what is observed. (1971; 9)

This, I take it, is not to state a means of providing an explanation of the acquisition a notion of causation in terms of something else which is conceptually prior to it. Rather it is to point to an immanent fact which any picture of how empirical creatures like us relate to causal facts must have a place for: that the practice of using *particular* causal notions is learned through ostensive teaching (or perhaps more aptly, through ostensive *training*).

This picture, however, is a little misleading; the ambiguity of "primary causal knowledge" (between knowing-*how* and knowing-*that*) might suggest a picture upon which our ability to pick out causation is contemporaneous with learning how to apply causal verbs to observational evidence. This, though, cannot be right, as the following example shows. The example is of a particular instance of a language learner acquiring the skill of using a causal verb; it makes clear that there can be no such clean divide between what is observed and the concept applied.

**Acquisition Example:** A child who has never seen a shattering before, witnesses a stone being thrown at the window of a house, and then the ensuing shattering; an adult points to the location at which the shattering occurred, and utters an appropriate phrase.

In such a case there must be a sense in which such events are already *experienced* as parts of a causal process by the child. For, if it were not the case that the process were visually present to the child as a causal process, the content of the demonstrative which

the adult uttered would be, at best, *radically indeterminate* – the child could not individuate the particular change as a change in the glass because of the stone – and at worst *contentless*; there would be no way of structuring the present scene as connected with what has been and will come.

One might object that the child, in this case, has obviously learnt the verb retrospectively: she saw the shattering, and then was informed that it was a shattering. If all causal verbs were learnt this way, one might think that the inability to directly experience a causing had been evinced. For, if we gain causal notions by applying a causal concept to some prior experiential information, then that information may look to be at some point bereft of causal content.

The obvious rejoinder to this objection is the classic Kantian move against the empiricist *tabula rasa*: to ask why a succession of perceptions implies a perception of succession; more particularly, to ask in virtue of what the child would be able to associate the salient aspects of the scene, or even identify the salient aspects of the scene. For, in order to identify any of the salient aspects, the child would at least have to recognise objects; and to recognise objects as individuated agents, as we saw in discussion of primitive mechanics, she would have to already recognise them as causal role players.

One might even go further and think we can clarify what is problematic about thinking that the norms governing our cognising of causes are externally or weakly internally related to particular causings (or to some substance we will relate to by applying causal concepts to it) by considering this further objection to the verb-learning-child scenario (cf. p205): the example is too simple to show anything – it does not, for instance, allow that the child would learn the concept of shattering by performing a proto-theoretical comparison a variety of different experiences of shattering.

To allow that the child acquires particular causal notions in this manner, however, would be to introduce the dreaded gap between what we are presented with in experience and how we ought to go on by introducing a theoretical grasp of intrinsic properties of the sort Evans did (cf. 5.21-5.22). It would also be to miss another explanatory option. We can appeal to the idea of causality as a primitive phenomenon –

and say, rather than the information being causally bereft, that the information is already causally structured in such a way as to afford the child a substrata of fixed possibilities – the hardness of the stone, the brittleness of the window, etc – which serve to make the change in the state of the window the variable under observation.

Notice, though, that for exactly the reasons given in chapter 2 regarding the idea that an object might guide our application of norms to it, we must be careful in how we think of our relation to the primitive causal phenomena we are acquiring a notion of. If we take it that the objects guide our deployment of norms by being intrinsically normative (as the CPT holds) and intimating as much to us, we have introduced *super-pictures* (cf. 4.11) into our account. One might think we could salvage the CPT by establishing an isomorphism between the intrinsic modal structure of objects and our capacity to experience them, but this would be to accept, as it were, the worst of both worlds. For on such a picture we would have posited intrinsically modal properties, *and* posited an independently intelligible grasp of norms which allow us contact with such properties.

The problem is now familiar: if one takes there to be an external relation between a normative authority and the normative context which allows it normative force, then, if we rule out *super-pictures*, we are left needing to characterise norms which are intelligible independently of their criteria for correctness.

If we jettison the picture of norms and particular causings as externally related (as I showed we could when discussing Evans (5.22)), we are left with a CPV which gives this sort of description: a precondition of the deployment of particular causal notions is the experiential apprehension of particular causings, which, on further reflection we find requires appreciation of a wider causal nexus. Establishing what the preconditions of the apprehension of particular causings are only leads to the articulation of more causal relations. This is an instantiation of the general point made by Langton's Kant regarding the interplay of receptivity and irreducibility: that no matter how far you go down, the description of any one causal power invokes a backdrop of more causal relations which are the relations we are holding fixed, just as the child in the example is holding fixed the causal properties of glass, stones, things producing background sounds, *et cetera*. None of this, however, possesses any threat to our experiencing an object's causal powers as objective.



What is held fixed then, is a normative matter in the same way as, at the very beginning of this thesis, we found that we would have to know what a football is in order to individuate one (because to individuate a football we would have to know which modal relations to count as salient and which to count as accidental): to individuate a particular causing, we have to hold our surroundings, in appropriate ways, fixed. And to be able to hold our surroundings fixed in appropriate ways, we have to have some criteria for appropriateness.

What then of apprehension of novel causings – i.e. of, cases where we do not yet know what is appropriate? Here we need to look back to Steiner on novel mathematical rules (cf. 2.5-2.6) and Diamond on the difference between transitive and intransitive language use (cf. 4.22-4.3). In each of those cases we saw it was important to identify a double confusion:

- a confusion of objects being treated as candidates for criteria with assessments of objects according to criteria; this confusion was created by thinking that some predetermined criteria *must* be appropriate in novel cases;
- confusing the fact that criteria are not accountable to the standards they set with the thought that they are intrinsically unaccountable – thus thinking that those objects are either anormative, or they are intrinsic founts of normativity.

How, then does the child know how to find her way into holding the same things as adults criterial? She does not *know* how. She shares common interests, constitution, and abilities with her community, and from this already norm-laden position, can try out treating parts of the world which are already available to her as criterial – some of which fall by the wayside, and some of which do not; some of which lead her into sharing richer normative landscapes with others, and some of which do not.

By focusing upon how a level of causally structured experience can be immediately available to both language teacher and language learner, then, we have met with a familiar Wittgenstenian theme found most explicitly at PI 242

[i]f language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments.

It must be a natural fact that any moves we make within a language game are at once causal in the most basic sense we can get to, and yet still modally and normatively rich in a way which is shared by similar creatures.

This thought – that normative authorities must be a part of the logical space in which they have normative force – is that which I explicated with regard to Kripke's view of the metre-stick in Paris (cf. 4) by arguing that if something is to be amenable to measurement by a measuring system, the thing and the system must be co-dependent parts of the same logical space – that, in Wittgenstein's words,

It is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state results of measurement. But what we call "measuring" is partly determined by a certain constancy in results of measurement. (PI 242)

With particular regard to causation, then, we must appreciate both that in order to be sensitive to a particular causing we have to be able to appreciate that causings always already occupy a place within a wider causal-space which we are holding fixed, and that what is held fixed is in part determined by what of the modal array we inhabit is taken as criterial, and what is taken as an object of investigation. Causality is in these senses inherently normative. Our experience of particular causings is thus internally related to the particular causings we experience in the same way as our experience of spatial aspects of *space occupying stuff* is internally related to spatial aspects of *space occupying stuff*.

Intrinsic properties which are thought to stand outside of this modal and normative space are not the things we refer to when we talk of the world, or the things we experience. The world is, in at least this much, always already modally and normatively structured.

### **5.33 Conclusions About Causality**

As the causes we individuate are the referents of our every day talk about causality, and we have no way of analysing such talk which would not invoke more modal

contexts which are inherently normative, there is no anormative description of causes for us to get to. To separate off this fact about individuating causes from what causes are would require finding some sense in the idea of a separation between the intrinsic and the relational; but we have seen that acceptance of such a distinction would commit us to either a problematic external relation between normative force and normative authority, or to an internal relation between causes and their individuation which would render the intrinsic properties of the world *superfluous* to the causal properties we refer to. So we ought to take at face value the idea that causal phenomena are inherently normative.

To conclude I want to relate this stance towards causality to the mythological method which I outlined as a response to the key claim of this thesis which I last summarised in the introduction to this the current chapter – that philosophical pictures cannot *explain* the applicability of norms (cf. 4.3).

On my account there is nothing supernatural about causality: considering things as causally related presents us with a particular kind of logical space which is normatively and modally structured, but by being structured so causings do not impinge upon us in such a way as to show us that they are so structured. Their structure is apparent to us because causings bear internal relations to other parts of causal space and to us. Thus, in the manner which I first characterised in relation to Steiner, our present grasp of the causal realm we inhabit provides us, with regard to our ability to make use of causal relations to find out more about the causal realm, with grounds-qua-enablings not grounds-qua-justifications (cf. 2.5-2.6).

The idea of mythological method, which I used to summarise the stance argued for in chapter 4, applies to our appreciation of the causal realm in the following way. As subjects who inhabit the causal realm, and represent it to ourselves, we have an appreciation that the causal realm outstrips our appreciation of it. To explore the causal realm, we treat certain causal relations as *givens* in representations of the world, and attend to similarities and differences between this representation and the world we experience.

There is, of course, a level of scientific practice at which it is useful to disregard as far as possible the norms inherent in bringing particular causings into view, and by aiming at such detachment, to get as unified a view as is possible upon the modal nexus we inhabit (how much detachment is possible, and exactly how unified the resultant view is, is not a concern I have addressed or intend to address here). I have given no reason not to accept this sort of practice as one of the most useful and fundamental ways of relating to the world that we have. What I have given reason to reject is the scientism which, in chapter 3, we saw McDowell attribute to Williams – the idea that because this practice is so useful we ought to take the anormative view of the world it utilises as representative of the true intrinsic nature of the world.

I do not avoid such scientism, however, by making the sort of move Rorty did; by claiming that, in scientific practice we treat the world as anormative

simply because, when we tell our Whiggish stories about how our ancestors gradually crawled up the mountain on whose (possibly false) summit we stand, we need to keep some things constant throughout the story. (1980; 344–345)

In attributing the capacity for truth and falsity to the picture of the world we currently operate with (the “(possibly false) summit we stand” on), such a view misses the point that the role of the idea of practice-independence in scientific practice is constitutive of an idealised object of comparison, and thus, in that capacity, is not the sort of thing which is in Rorty's metaphysical sense 'possibly false'. It is, for the same reason, not the sort of thing which we usually have reason to say is true of the world.

There is a clear connection here to a thought expressed at 4.23, that even if the assumption of the conceptual unity of language is constitutive of the usefulness of truth-functional analysis, and truth-functional analysis is our best way of describing language use, this entails neither that we should treat all language use as conceptually unified, nor that we would be justified in attributing *falsity* to a truth-functional analysis (cf. 4.3). However, *showing* that truth-functional analyses produces inappropriate descriptions in certain instances does allow us to show that treating truth-functional semantics as, in some *absolute* sense, *true of language*, is destructive of the very possibility of a useful notion of truth.

Accepting the normativity of causality, then, is emphatically not to devalue the *scientific image* of the world by way of claiming it is not *useful* in the way it purports to be, or by claiming that it is *merely a useful fiction* (for to make sense of 'fiction' here would require making sense of what it would be to be non-fictional), or by questioning the *truth* of assertions made by using such accounts (because to do so would require a sense to 'truth' over and above that which falls out of the transitive use of concepts). What it does throw into question is a form of *scientism* which suffers from a confusion similar to Kripke's – that the means of measurement, in the context of measurement, are the sorts of things which it makes sense to talk of as truly or falsely representing the world (cf. 4.22-4.3).

## **Conclusion**

By looking at the problems motivating transcendental idealism, we have identified a deep and pernicious tendency to attempt to solve those problems by modifying a metaphysical scheme-content picture, or by making use of that picture to justify a rejection of itself. Often this modification was carried out in ways which made it seem like the picture of scheme and content had been dropped; but such modifications turned out either to be attempts to explain how content was not problematically implicated in scheme by disconnecting scheme from content (which on closer inspection turned out to be untenable (cf. 3.32-3.33)), or how content is implicated in scheme but we ought not talk about it (which is to lose the interplay between language use and its context which allows us to usefully compare parts of language to each other and the world (cf. 4.11, 4.24)). All of these attempts still retain a picture of scheme and content which entails a problematic relation between normative force and normative authority first described at 1.31-1.33.

By playing through the transcendental idealist picture, then, we have seen that it falls foul of its own strictures only by attempting to give explanations where it itself has shown that no explanation with sense can be given. What we ought to do instead is to engage in the stipulative use of scheme-content pictures (pictures containing intrinsically normative items, or rules which contain their own criteria for application which hitherto seemed to stand in need of truth-makers) to make objects of comparisons which allow us to *describe* how things are, and how they are not, and also allow us to keep in mind that this is the role that *objects of comparison* are playing.

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